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"MY" MASS

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Translated from the French of

ABBÉ CHARLES GRIMAUD

BY

RT. REV. MSGR. JAMES F. NEWCOMB, P.A., J.C.D.

With Preface by

Most Rev. Michael J. Curley, D.D.

Archbishop of Baltimore

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PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES

Archbishop of New York.

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FOREWORD

A FULL realization of the treasures of the Mass is a vital need for Catholics always and everywhere. For the Mass alone counts; its worth is infinite, its efficacy embraces all the earth—and beyond. The source of the faith and love that pulsate in the heart of the elect, it is the spiritual storehouse of power, light, and life. In the day-in and day-out appropriation of its graces, what highest hope, what heavenly promise lies!

The chief task for every true child of the Church who wishes religiously to fulfil his place and win God's grace is to make the Mass his own. Nor can any real Catholic excuse himself of the obligation of learning more and more of that great sacrifice which is daily offered. Acquainted with the rite, he will become more alive to its beauties, more aware of its dramatic richness. More than that, he will know that the Mass is an Act. Not a prayer simply, nor a glorious ceremony, but the supreme Christocentric worship wherein the Son of God offers Himself and His Christian in Himself, so that God, looking upon the Mass, sees both His Son and those who are "'in one' with Him."

How infinitely important, then, for every Catholic to know that hearing Mass is nothing less than offering Jesus Christ and myself along with Him, to God,

His Father and mine! "For me," he can say, "the Mass is 'My Mass,'" since there is a very real sense in which all the faithful may take part in the action of the Mass, a very real way in which they offer Mass. Nor is there any reason why my soul's eyes should be held, my heart drugged, myself aloof from that actual participation with Christ.

Grave, indeed, were the ignorance that would preclude our appropriating the actual treasures of the Mass. Let there be no confusion, then, as to our great privilege. The Mass, which each of the faithful offers with Christ and His priest, remains the one thing on earth eternally worth while. Therein, by incorporation in the Mystical Body of Christ, we affiliate ourselves with our Divine Chief. So it is that the daily sacrifice holds out for us the great gift, personal union with Christ such as makes possession of all things else of second rate. What need, let it be iterated, for the true Catholic to be divinely conscious of his high place in that perfect worship and to improve, daily if possible, his vital membership in that supernatural organism composed of those called to be Christ's.

If our people only did know. . . . Would that the day were nigh when high and low, rich and poor, would "come and see"; when each according to his vision and eagerness would garner new graces, fresh truths, impelling inspirations. To realize our place in the Mass, our great privilege, as co-offerers, co-operators with our Emmanuel, our Elder Brother; this is indeed our inestimable privilege. What a vista of Christian privileges comes into play in the daily

life of the Christian who so knows! Sad that so many are spiritually shortsighted to the advantages conferred upon the worshiper at Mass, and insensitive to their great place "within those walls of God," and their greater privilege in the divine drama daily enacted there.

A grave defect in Catholic daily life will be remedied when everything possible is done to make the Mass and the laity's place therein better known and loved. Not till then will the Holy Sacrifice become the spiritual school of our every-day attendance. For the Mass is indeed the High School of Jesus Christ. Its curriculum comprises the vital things: the acts worth doing, the truths worth knowing, prayer and praise and enduring service. Where else shall we find such a course as can supply to all—Grown-ups, Teeners and Tots—those energies that make for vision, purity of heart, strength of resolve, perfection of Christian character. And what can compare with the Mass in bringing the Way, the Truth, and the Life into the being and faculties of all, young and old.

Quite apart from the wealth of grace and truth flowing from the Holy Sacrifice, there is another benefit. There is in the Mass a veritable treasure-trove to interest and intrigue the mind as well as the heart and soul. Next to Holy Writ, no single text in existence has anything like the value of the Roman Rite. What could be more worthy of study than that masterpiece, deep-rooted in our Catholic past, watered by the blood of martyrs, redolent of

the faith of the ages! What more truly illuminating and inspiring than its

> "Words of wide meaning . . . justly weighed
> Into proportion, color, line and tone."

Nobody can now say that there is want of a book that makes those truths most clear to all and stresses the part which the faithful take in the action of the Mass. The work of M. l'Abbé Grimaud, along with other services, assigns the layman to his place by the side of Christ—*à côté du Christ*. "By Him, and with Him, and in Him" do the laity act. As co-offerers with the Great High Priest Whose members they are, the faithful partake vitally in the Mass; they offer a real and true sacrifice together with their Chief; they give glory to the Holy Trinity, united as they are with the Son of God, their Elder Brother.

Because of a long-standing need now supplied, we are exceedingly grateful to Monsignor Newcomb for his excellent translation of "'*Ma*' Messe." What consolations and devotion will accrue to the careful reader of this book, so solid yet not heavy, so full of dignity and wisdom, so clear and so inspirational. Here are pages of spiritual beauty to be carried in one's mind for periods and to be thought over and over. Read and reread them. You will prize them the more. Indeed, one must read "'My' Mass" to see for himself. No foreword, long or short, can quite make that clear. The hope, then, very near our heart is that multitudes will find this book and that

for them its every chapter will glow with faith, gleam with insight, flash and beam with rays of truth to render incandescent their love of the Mass that is the Catholic's inalienable inheritance.

✠ Michael J. Curley.
Abp. of Balto.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

IT HAS been the devout pleasure of the translator to put into as simple and direct English as possible the sublime concepts of the "Mystical Christ" which M. l'Abbé Grimaud has gathered from Apostles, Fathers, and Doctors of the Church and offered to thoughtful Christians in book form under the title "'*Ma*' Messe."

Making use of the theological notions underlying St. John's "vine and branches," St. Paul's "head and members," the Fathers' and Doctors' "Mystical Christ" and "Mystical Body," the author has drawn a clear and correct picture of that organism whose members are the saved of the Church of Heaven, the suffering of the Church in Purgatory, and, especially, the warfaring of the Church on Earth, whose Head is the Chief of Mankind, Jesus the Christ, He Who is "Incomparable," "Admirable," "Adorable."

Let us hope that this English version of M. l'Abbé Grimaud's practical exposition of the Christian's exalted status as "member of Christ" may help to spread amongst Americans, almost the "last-born" of the Church, age-old and authentic ideas of the relation of "member" to the Priesthood and the Sacrifice, that individual self-respect may increase and new honor and glory come to Christ our King.

J. F. Newcomb, P.A., J.C.D.

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

MANY Christians are worried about doing so little for God's glory. They fear that time, in its rapid flight, may drop them almost empty-handed on eternity's threshold. Most willingly would they attain in full the end for which they were created—God's praise—and, hampered by business, held back by sickness, hindered by family affairs, they grieve at the thought of their days slipping away too quickly for them to give God glorification that would approach being satisfactory to Him.

Suspending introspection and looking out upon the world, these same Christians are scandalized at seeing God so offended, so forgotten, and ask themselves how the Most High can tolerate such insults from His creatures. Thoughts like these trouble their faith. Bestormed with the desire to build up God's Kingdom, they seek the best possible means of setting this topsy-turvy world to rights and of drawing from it for the Creator the glory due Him from His creation.

Such souls should not despair. Their uneasiness arises chiefly from their natural lack of true enlightenment. They do not divine the excess of praise sent up from this earth, apparently so ungrateful, to the Eternal Majesty. Much less, perhaps, do

they suspect that they, themselves, can procure for God that "complete and perfect honor" which they so ardently desire for Him, provided that they co-operate with Christ in the infinite homage rendered by Him to the Most Holy Trinity.

The truth is that they have only to renew Calvary's oblation; with, in, and through Christ, they have the means of attaining in full the end assigned them by God, that is, to procure Him a glory that is complete, unshadowed, flawless. Is this not a consoling and wholly quieting doctrine that gives us the key to the mystery of God's patience with a sinning world?

Before the minds of Christians eager to serve God, to spread His Kingdom, and to prepare themselves for eternity, this book will attempt to bring thoughts on the Sacrifice of our altars that have, hitherto, perhaps, not entered into the realm of their conjecture. Its purpose is to show them that Christ is not alone in the celebration of the Mass, but that He associates the faithful with Him, or, rather, that He and the faithful form *one only Christ* giving God infinite praise, and to show this so well that each of us, dropping the more familiar than exact "I am going to Mass," will decide to replace it with this other and perfectly correct formula, "I am going, with Christ, to celebrate *my* Mass."

* * *

To us in our lives as Christians will come great, even immeasurable, boons from this clearer knowledge of our participation in Our Saviour's priestly activity.

We shall interest ourselves in the Mass as we do in all things that are *ours*, and shall strive, henceforth, to contrive better means for taking a greater part in it, and shall experience greater happiness when attending it.

We shall find ourselves consoled. In fact, from the moment of our consciousness that we are fulfilling the most noble of offices in co-operating in giving God complete and entire homage, the prelude to that which we shall offer Him through Jesus Christ's ministry throughout eternity, we shall feel that we are no longer useless creatures.

We shall increase in spiritual perfection. That we may be more intimately united to Christ in the priceless act of Oblation, we shall not hesitate to make ourselves conformable to His will in all things, to deny ourselves everything displeasing to Him, and always to seek after everything pleasing to Him,—all to gain what should be within us, perfect concordance in thought and feeling between the Eternal Priest and His humble co-workers.

We shall be blameless, fearless Christians. How can men or events strike fear in those who, with Christ, walk in utmost intimacy with God Himself,—with God, Master of hearts and Sovereign Lord of all things?

CHARLES GRIMAUD.

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PART THE FIRST

MY PART IN CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

The first chapter, "Jesus Christ, the Priest," recalls to our minds the fundamental truths that have to do with Our Lord Jesus Christ's Priesthood.

The second chapter, "The Christian, a Member of Christ," tells us how we, being many, make only one with Christ, the Priest.

The third chapter, "The Member with the Head, Sacrificer and Sacrificed," explains the part taken by the faithful in the office of Jesus, the Priest.

The fourth chapter, "The Mass, the Visible Offering of the Mystical Christ," shows that the truths explained in the preceding chapters are expressed for sight and hearing in the liturgy of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

CHAPTER THE FIRST

JESUS CHRIST, THE PRIEST

Wherein it is to be shown that the one being capable of offering infinite and wholly reparative homage to God is Christ, human like sinners, divine like His Father, and that, under the title of Man-God, Christ is the official priest of the Divinity.

The Divine Decree

Man, through his sin, was lost. An offended God could have left him in his dismal state of discardure. Such a solution would have been only just, but it would have appeared neither merciful enough nor, above all, glorious enough for God, since it would seem that He was ending with a single stroke the chief and crowning work of the divine hands—mankind.

God decided to save man—but how? The Most High, in His infinite goodness, could have restored man to his former state by the simple pardon of his sin, but so absolute a boon would have been too easily gained, on our part, and too lacking in majesty, on that of God.

God could, indeed, have required that man perform certain acts of reparation in return for which

He would have pardoned mankind, but since, of themselves, the acts of this "microbe in rebellion" would have been valueless, such a solution, in the end, would have amounted to man's absolute and unconditional pardon.

The marvelous wisdom of the Infinite Majesty issued a truly sublime decree, a decree of limitless goodness and generosity, through which, by one act, God could save man, safeguard justice, and obtain perfect glorification from Creation, which thereby would attain in full the end for which it had been brought into being. God's decree was that the Son, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, *should become Priest*, that is, that the Word, the Son of God, should lower Himself to the assuming of human nature, so that, as Man representing His whole race, He might, in honor of the Most Holy Trinity, perform a priestly function through which God, on the one hand, would be praised, glorified, and thanked in the highest possible degree, and man, on the other, would pay his debt and be redeemed.

This design was carried out by order of the Father with the aid of the Holy Ghost, as the liturgy of the Mass emphasizes, "*ex voluntate Patris, cooperante Spiritu Sancto.*" [1] Thus can God, in accordance with His own eternal plans, draw from creation the greatest possible glory, thanks to the decree through which Jesus Christ, the Man-God, becomes His official Priest.

[1] "Ordinary of the Mass," at beginning of second prayer before priest's communion, "*ex voluntate Patris, cooperante Spiritu Sancto*"—"by order of the Father with the co-operation of the Holy Ghost."

Concept of the Priesthood

What is it to be a priest?

It is to be entrusted by the Almighty with the office, right, and privilege of putting the creature in touch with the Creator, of establishing the necessary relations between God and man. To be a priest is to be a *mediator*.

The priest is a "bridge" thrown between earth and heaven. Thus, Jesus Christ merits the name "Pontiff," for He "is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God." [2]

The priest is entrusted with offering to the Most High the public and solemn acts of homage due God officially from human society, which, as constituted by God Himself, cannot be conceived of as priestless.

Jesus Christ, the Supreme Priest

One man, alone, has been chosen by God to renew in its fulness between His fellow-men and the Divine Majesty the connection broken by sin, and to render the Most Holy Trinity all Its due honor—and this incomparable priest is Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Him could God have chosen and made Priest, even had Adam's race remained innocent, that He, as "mankind's Chief," might give perfect homage to mankind's Creator and establish intimate relations between earth and Heaven. In that event, Christ's

[2] Hebrews v, 1—The word "pontiff" comes from the Latin *pontifex*, derived from *pons*, "bridge" and *facere*, "to make." The pagan Roman "pontiffs" were guardians of the sacred Sublician Bridge.—TRANSLATOR.

priestly activity would have consisted solely of rendering glorification to God on the part of man. There would have been no motive of reparation. Christ's sacrifice would have been wholly and entirely one of praise and thanksgiving, to the complete exclusion of the motive of expiation.

However, since man had sinned, Christ the Priest, Whose mission it was to advance God's glory, had, to achieve His mission, to blot out sin and make satisfaction for its commission; for this reason the Wisdom of God decreed that the essential act of Christ's Priesthood should be a bloody sacrifice. He exacted the cruel death of the Cross from the Man-God, Who was eager to obey.

Since one man, alone, was chosen by God to offer this Sacrifice, it follows that there is *only one principal and essential priest*, Jesus Christ, Who, God and Man, is capable of expiating faults, glorifying Sovereign Majesty, and offering homage of infinite value.

Jesus Christ, the Supreme Priest, is mankind's Priest, *our* Priest, in consequence of being *our* intermediary, the inevitable intermediary between ourselves and the Holy Trinity. No other have we, and no other can we have. This is why we tell Him in the "*Gloria in excelsis*": "Thou alone art holy; Thou alone Lord; Thou alone Most High."[3] "Neither is there salvation in any other."[4]

[3] Ordinary of the Mass, "*Gloria in excelsis*"—"*Tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus altissimus.*"
[4] Acts iv, 12.

Why Is Jesus Christ our Priest?

That Christ might be our Priest several conditions had to be fulfilled:

1. It was befitting that He should be a member of the human race, *one of us*—otherwise, He would not have been our representative. For the purification of mankind soiled by sin, God demanded reparation that, although still proceeding from human nature, would be sufficient and superabundant, that is, infinite. That the divine decree of the restoration of God's glory might be carried out, it was necessary, then, that the "Word be made flesh." "Therefore because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same: that through death, he might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil: and might deliver them, who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to servitude. For nowhere doth he take hold of the angels: but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold. Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God, that he might be a propitiation for the sins of the people." [5]

2. It was befitting that He should be of the "race" of God—otherwise, He would have been powerless to offer reparation and adoration which, to suffice, had to be infinite. Therefore, for the carrying out of the decree of the restoration of His glory, the Divine Majesty did not appoint either an eminent

[5] Hebrews ii, 14-17.

man or the most beautiful of angels, but a Man-God, Who, while having true human nature, should, at the same time, be the "Son" Himself, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, equal to the Father and to the Holy Ghost. This Priest, alone, because He is man and God, is capable of offering God adequate worship.

3. It was necessary that He receive from God Himself the priestly mission, the *vocation to the Priesthood*, that vocation whose essence is the call served upon the subject by the competent authority. God has "called" Our Lord to the Supreme Priesthood. "Jesus Christ," says Saint Paul, "also did not glorify himself, that he might be made a high priest: but he that said unto him: 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.'" [6] Although the Son is Son from all eternity, these words were not addressed to Him, according to the Psalmist, until the moment of His assumption of human nature. His consecration as Priest, that is, as formally appointed mediator of the human race before God, was one with His becoming man. By oath did the Father confirm Him in this dignity: "The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent: Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." [7]

4. It was necessary that the chosen one accept willingly this priestly mission, for the priesthood is not conferred against one's will. Jesus Christ submitted with eager joy to the eternal decree consecrat-

[6] *Ib.* v, 5.
[7] Psalm cix, 4.

ing Him Priest. That submissive and joyous consent of the Incarnate Word is dated, in time, from the moment of His assumption of human nature, according to Revelation as contained in the words to His Father on the Son's entrance into the world: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, 'Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not; but a body thou fittest me' " [8]—evidently that that body might become matter for sacrifice and oblation—"Then said I, 'Behold, I come to do thy will, O God!' " [9]

When was Christ ordained Priest?

If such a term is applicable in regard to Jesus Christ, His "ordination" occurred at the moment of His Incarnation. At that moment His human nature received all priestly powers from its union with the divine nature through the person of the Word. Union with the divine nature gave His humanity a set and determinate mission, that of offering to God in the name of the whole human race, past, present, and future, an infinitely perfect homage of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition. Jesus Christ was, then, "ordained" Priest at the moment of union of His human and divine natures, because He became Man-God; since He will never cease to be Man-God, His "ordination" is eternal, He is a "priest forever."

[8] Hebrews x, 7.
[9] *Ib.* x, 9.

Jesus the Priest's Sacrifice

Jesus Christ was ordained Priest solely to offer a sacrifice to the Divinity in the name of mankind, for the priesthood's sole reason for being is the offering of sacrifice. Jesus Christ, the Supreme Priest, offers only one sacrifice, that of Calvary. On the Cross, He immolates Himself to His Father that the sovereign dominion and infinite power of God may have absolute recognition. Evidently, if the most perfect creature conceivable by Divine Wisdom is forced to annihilate Himself before His Maker, that is proof that *God alone* is Lord and Master, and that His footstool is heaven and earth and all contained therein.

This abasement of the Man-God is, then, a recognition of the divine supremacy that is effective, evident to the senses, and official, consisting of an adoration of God that is entire, an act of thanksgiving that is infinite, and reparation that is complete. So great is the scope of the sacrifice of the Cross that, of itself alone and instantaneously, in full and unreservedly, it can attain the supreme end of God's glorification on the part of the creature.

Instantaneously and of itself, it can gather together in one mass all the treasures of homage and reparation, but the question of distribution of these riches of grace and redemption in space and time arises; how shall each human being, each family, each group of families take part in this infinite homage? In a word, how shall Calvary's boons be spread throughout the world? The answer is plain

and direct—through the Mass, the daily renewal of the *only* Sacrifice. Christ's Eucharistic Sacrifice gives us the chance and the right to take part in the redeeming Sacrifice of Golgotha, by permitting us, as we shall see, to play a personal rôle in it, as if we had lived on the day of its consummation, as if we had been standing at the foot of the Cross between Mary and Saint John.

The Priest and priests

Jesus Christ is, then, *the Priest*, the principal Priest, the only Priest *of himself* absolute and unqualified that ever has existed, that ever shall exist, offering the only sacrifice ever exacted by God as solely satisfactory and sufficing, all others having been accepted only as figures!

What then are priests, the men who, in Christian society, celebrate Holy Mass and perform sacred duties? They are Jesus Christ's representatives amongst men. They take His place. They are Jesus Christ, visible and active, in our midst. As Our Lord did not wish to prolong throughout the ages His material earthly existence, visibly to perform His priestly work in human society, He has chosen certain men whom He marks with a special and ineffaceable character by virtue of which He confers upon them the power of exercising, in a visible manner, His supernatural functions amongst us. Actually, Jesus Christ and His minister form a moral unit, accomplishing one and the same act to which Christ's power gives efficacy, the priest's pres-

ence, visibility. Since priests are the instruments used by the Sovereign Priest in the exercise of His priestly activity amongst men, since, therefore, they are in direct contact with the source of all supernatural good, from which they can draw the choicest of graces, sublime is their dignity, marvelous are their prerogatives, peculiarly propitious their lot.

The Priest, priests, the faithful, the Mass

Only one Priest, Jesus Christ, was appointed by God to reunite Heaven and earth in offering, on Calvary, the Infinite Sacrifice of praise, adoration, and reparation to the Eternal Majesty, but Jesus the Priest was unwilling to have His great immolation become for Christians merely an "historical fact" that, lost in the mists of a distant past, would gradually disappear from the memory of man, so He determined that His Sacrifice should be renewed, in the unfolding of time, as often as necessary. That He may immolate Himself anew, in union with one or another body of the faithful and apply to it, particularly, a portion of His Passion's merits, Jesus Christ puts His divine seal upon certain men who, at appointed times, shall reproduce His Sacrifice on the altar; these men are our priests, true sharers of Christ's eternal Priesthood; the renewal of the Act of His Priesthood is the Mass.

We have, then—one sole Priest, self-existent, one sole Sacrifice offered by priests, men intimately united to the Chief Priest, with Whose powers they

are endowed. The Supreme Priest, through the ministry of His priests, renews this Sacrifice at every Mass, that each one of the faithful on earth may share in it and receive its fruits.

The faithful's part in the Mass

We must now consider the "participation" reserved to the simple faithful in the offering of Jesus the Priest's Sacrifice. We shall see that, although they are not, as are priests, official sacrificers of the Holy Victim, nevertheless, they do truly offer Him by the celebrant's hands, and that, thereby, their part in the oblation, that does not take place without their concurrence, is very important. This liturgical rôle, this sharing by the baptized faithful in Christ's priestly office, has won the Christian people the title of "kingly priesthood" given it by Saint Peter,[10] a "holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Christ Jesus" [11] as the rest of this book will show us.

One must not be surprised if, throughout this volume, the wondrous rôle and sublime dignity of priests should appear somewhat obscured. The office of the priest, as such, is neither forgotten nor disregarded, but, since the purpose of this book is to show the faithful, for their consolation and devotion, the prodigious and too often unknown part they take, in union with the celebrant, in the Sacrifice, our principal concern is with this prerogative

[10] St. Peter, ii, 9.
[11] St. Peter, ii, 5.

of Christians. Readers seeking a wider and more particular knowledge of the priesthood's grandeur will find in a host of books on the Mass and on the priesthood that increase of knowledge and edification that they rightly desire.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

THE CHRISTIAN, A MEMBER OF CHRIST

Wherein it is to be shown that if Christ is Chief Priest, the Christian, in consequence of being part of Christ, co-operates with Him in His priestly office.

The "Mystical Christ"

One Priest alone offers the Mass—Jesus Christ; but what must be understood, in this connection, by "Jesus Christ"? This question's answer reveals to our mental vision a horizon of thought that is beyond the mind's encompassing by either analogy or comparison.

The Christ Who offers Mass is not, as the faithful too easily image Him, the humiliated Christ, "despised, and the most abject of men"; Jesus Christ no longer exists under that form, forever passed from Him. The Christ Who offers Mass and is present upon our altars is the *real* Christ, glorified, glorious, reigning in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father, busied with completing the work of the Redemption.

However, this real Christ *is not alone.* To Jesus Christ, the Head and Chief, has been joined His "Mystical Body," which is the Church, the assembly

of the faithful. According to Saint Augustine, Jesus Christ and His "Mystical Body" compose the "whole Christ," the Christ forever offering to God upon our altars the homage of Infinite Sacrifice: "The whole Christ is Head and Body; His Head is the only-begotten Son of God, His Body the Church." [1]

Elements of the "Mystical Christ"

The "Mystical Christ," Chief Priest of the Most High, is, then, Jesus united to the faithful, as our head is united to our members to form only one perfect whole, working, as an organic whole, for the same purpose and toward the same end. Holy Church, the company of the faithful under Christ, is Christ's "Mystical Body"; He is the Head, the faithful, the members. Therefore the Church is the "fulness" of Christ.[2]

The term "mystical" must not prompt us to regard this body as fictional, for there is nothing imaginary about the "Mystical Christ." It is Christ as He now actually is—the Head inseparable from His ransomed members, rendering, in union with them, perfect glory to the Most Holy Trinity.

Make-up of Christ's "Mystical Body"

The "Mystical Body," or the "Church of Christ," is, then, the company of the faithful united to

[1] *De unitate Ecclesiae contra Donatistas*, n. 7.

[2] Ephesians 1, 23—"Which is his body, and the fulness of him who is filled all in all."

Christ; but how is this union of head and members in this "society of the faithful" formed? It has its own peculiar and incomparable formation which we must try to understand.

Every society binds its members together and to its head by some sort of tie. For example, soldiers are bound to the general of an army division by unity of wills and acceptance of rigid discipline in the service of their common country. The nature of the tie by which the Church holds her members together is entirely different from and wholly superior to that of any tie binding members of human societies to their respective chiefs. In the "Mystical Body," the Christian is bound to his Chief by an absolute tie of extraordinary power, *grace*, the principle of supernatural life.

This grace, which unites, vivifies, and *transforms* all the members, flows from the Head. Christ the Head is filled with the Holy Ghost, Who, at one and the same time, is the infuser of life into the Head and the whole "Mystical Body." From the Holy Ghost there descends down through the Head into all the members an effluvium that lives and makes to live; "*vivificantem*," "vivifying," as the Creed of the Mass, the Nicene, has it. This effluvium, grace, performs a wondrous function in the make-up of the "Mystical Body"; it transforms the "old man," as Saint Paul calls him,[3] that is, fallen man, unfitted for actual adhesion to the "Mystical Body," into a "new" man, a supernatural man, who, by virtue of this very

[3] *Ib.*, iv, 22.

transformation, finds himself "ingrafted"[4] on Christ, the Head and Chief.

The "old man's" transformation

Under the influence of grace the "old man" undergoes a transformation that, by causing him to pass into the supernatural state, assimilates him into the "Mystical Body." This action of grace can be made to approach comprehensibility only by means of comparison. Since He irradiates the light communicated to Him by the Holy Ghost, Christ can be compared to a magnificent diamond emitting sun-like rays—this irradiation is *grace*. This diamond has the marvelous power of giving the diamond's brilliance to every grain of sand coming within its circle of radiation. These grains of sand are all the sinful men who respond to Christ's grace. In turn, they become sparkling diamonds, irradiating the grace received from Christ. If one of these brilliants leaves the circle of radiation, he becomes, again and at once, a mere grain of sand—the "new" man again becomes merely the "natural" man, and is no longer part of Christ.

The mass of diamonds grouped around the central diamond and within its radius forms the "Mystical Body" whose splendor in that part of the body now in heaven is apparent. In that part of the body still on earth, its luster is so well hidden under vein-stone that the human eye cannot detect the difference between "natural" man, separated from Christ's

[4] Romans xi, 17 seq.

Body, and "supernaturalized" man, who only after he has "shuffled off this mortal coil" shall be "revealed even to himself." [5]

That part of the "Mystical Body" that is in heaven grows unceasingly with the entrance of the elect into Paradise. Grouped within the radiation of its center, Jesus Christ, the "Sun of Justice," this "Mystical Body" rapidly becomes larger and larger. From one All Saints' Day to the next, "Christ grows" until He shall have attained "the fulness of the age of his 'mystical' body," "his perfect growth," "*in plenitudinem aetatis corporis Christi—in virum perfectum.*" [6] Time shall then be over, the number of the elect complete.

Union of Head and members

Although the comparison just made helps us to understand the member's transformation under the influence of grace, it cannot give us an adequate idea of the *vital* union existing between Christ and the supernaturalized Christian. To understand how very close is the tie binding the members to the Head in the "Mystical Body," we must fall back upon the expressive figure used by Our Lord, Himself, when He deigned to initiate us into this great mystery.

Our Lord said to the Apostles: "I am the true vine; and my Father is the husbandman. . . . Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear

[5] *Ib.* viii, 18.
[6] Ephesians iv, 13.

fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. *I am the vine; you are the branches:* he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. . . . Abide in my love. . . . These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled." [7]

"I am the vine; you the branches." Our Lord could have chosen no more appropriate figure than this to make us understand the degree of closeness, *of union,* in the tie binding the faithful to Him in that *whole* that is the "Mystical Christ." The branch and the vine that carries it form only one living organism: the faithful Christian and Christ form only one moral being enjoying divine life.

Which bears the grape, the fruit? Evidently, the branch, but, nevertheless, not without the parent stem's help: the faithful Christian bears fruits of adoration, praise, reparation, but never without *Him.* "Without me, you can do nothing." The parent stem puts forth its fruits by means of its branches. Jesus Christ causes, in the Church, the effusion of marvels of sanctity through the medium of the faithful united to Him. However, if He must have *some* branches, He can dispense with *many.* The truth is that sin causes the death of *many* a branch—and, henceforth, although it remains joined to the vine by means of faith and the baptismal character, this twig is deprived of the vine's vivifying sap, until, through the grace of forgiveness, it regains life.

[7] St. John xv, 1-11.

A clearer exposition of the fact of union between Christ and the faithful, a union that is vital and indispensable, it would be hard to find. To have life, the Christian must "be one" with Christ in this great supernatural organism, the "Mystical Body." This exposition, furthermore, gives us an understanding of the "whole Christ's" make-up—vine, branches, twigs, leaves, and fruit. In full in His Humanity does Christ possess the sap which the Divinity enriches and causes to flow into the utmost extremities of His organs, that is, even into the least of the little souls bound to Him.

What is this sap which Christ, the divine vine, draws from the Holy Trinity? It is "sanctifying grace." Our Lord likens to sap that which is produced, sustained, and caused to flow by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit who filled Christ, our Head, from the instant of His conception, as we know from the Angel's words to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee . . . thou shalt conceive."[8] This Spirit of God, called by Saint Paul, indiscriminately, the "Holy Spirit" or the "Spirit of Christ," infuses the life of the Head into all the members of the "Mystical Body": it is by the "Holy Ghost, who is given to us" that "the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts,"[9] the "charity of God" being the love that unites and vivifies; "I am the vine; you the branches. . . . Abide in my love."

[8] St. Luke i, 35, 31.
[9] Romans v, 5.

Consequences of the "Mystical Body's" existence

By His statement, "I am the vine; you the branches," Our Lord has, then, revealed the existence of the "Mystical Christ" to us.

Since this "Mystical Body" exists, it must function, and its functioning must come under our observation—exactly what happens. Repeatedly, Holy Scripture recalls to our minds the consequences of the union of Head and members. Speaking of the Last Judgment, Our Lord says: "For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat . . . Naked, and you covered me: sick, and you visited me; I was a stranger, and you took me in—Amen, I say unto you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me." [10] Our Lord could hardly have stated more directly and positively the fact of the "Mystical Body's" functioning. Christ is His member, poor, sick, hungry, just as my hand is *I;*—as he who nurses my eye, my foot, my arm, nurses *me*, so he who ministers to a member of Christ, ministers to *Christ*. On the other hand, he who molests one of Christ's members, molests Christ Himself. This Our Lord plainly states when to Saint Paul, hurled to the ground on the Damascus Road, asking, "Who art thou, Lord?" He answers, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." [11] At once, Saint Paul comprehends the full meaning of the reply—he is hurting Jesus, because he is persecuting His members. To

[10] St. Matthew xxv, 35-40.
[11] Acts ix, 5.

see in this answer a mere figure of speech instead of an exact statement of reality would be belittling, on our part, the great Apostle's intelligence. Saint Augustine says: "If we were not His members, Jesus Christ would not have said to Saul: 'Why persecutest thou *me?*' for Saint Paul would not be persecuting *Him,* but His mere followers. Jesus Christ did not mean 'My holy ones,' 'My servants,' or, still more to our honor, 'My brothers,' but exactly what He said, '*ME,*' that is, 'My members, whose Head am I.'" Thus, under this Head, we, the members,[12] "being many, are one body in Christ." [13]

Saint Paul insists on the "Mystical Christ"

One cannot insist too much on the existence of this Mystical Christ and on the reality of our union with Him. The truth is that our participation in Calvary's Sacrifice, as it is renewed each day upon our altars, is grounded upon this mystery. A Christian cannot worthily celebrate *his* Mass with Jesus the Priest unless his conception of his connection with Christ be correct. Therefore we must strive to arrive at a more complete comprehension of the "Mystical Body," with the help of Saint Paul, who goes into the mystery with the detailed insistence demanded by so great and important a truth.

Saint Paul writes to the Romans:[14] "For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one

[12] *Tract. xxviii in Joann.*
[13] Romans xii, 5.
[14] Romans xii, 5.

body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Furthermore, far from harming the human body, the diversity of its organs gives it order and harmony; so, too, its variety of members endows the Mystical Body with beauty; "For the body also is not one member, but many. . . . And if they all were one member, where would be the body?" [15] "For as the body is one, and hath many members; and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body, so also is Christ." [16] Since sharing in the Head's life welds all these members together, they are bound one to another, and one cannot dispense with what is common to all: "And if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it." [17]

Stronger, more positive, and more emphatic proclamations of the union of the faithful with Christ and of Christ with the faithful cannot be made. The "complete" Christ, whole, entire, entrusted with offering eternally, upon our altars and in heaven, to God the homage that comes from that pedestal of His Humanity—Creation—is the "Head and His members," the great whole that is the Mystical Christ: "Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member." [18]

We are *members* of Jesus Christ. That is our condition. We are not His servants or, "still more to our honor," His brothers, but His members, trans-

[15] I Corinthians xii, 14, 19.
[16] *Ib.* xii, 12.
[17] *Ib.* xii, 26.
[18] *Ib.* xii, 25.

formed to His image and likeness and closely united to Him. Would that every one of the faithful appreciated at their full value these utterances that betoken such extraordinary significance for souls.

The Head of the "Mystical Body"

Of this "Mystical Body" Christ is the Head. Saint Paul proclaims this when he tells us, in great detail, of the rôle played by Jesus Christ as "Head and Chief." God "hath subjected all things under his feet, and hath made him head over all the church, which is his body." [19] Vitality and action flow into our arms, hands, and feet through the medium of the head—vitality and action flow into us, His members, through the medium of Christ. To paraphrase Saint Paul, the Church is, then, the "fulness" of Christ. She completes Him, as the body completes the human head, which could not function were no organism attached to it. The Apostle terminates his thought with, "Which is his body, and the fulness of him who is filled all in all," [20] showing that Christ would be neither complete nor whole if the faithful were not joined, as living members, to this *incomparable Head.*

When we are upon our knees before Christ in the tabernacle or ostensorium, let us reflect that Christ, present before our eyes under the Sacred Species, is the Head of the Christian gathering of which we are then forming a part, and that, He and we, there

[19] Ephesians i, 22, 23.
[20] *Ib.* i, 23.

present, are not separate entities side by side, but only one body under this "admirable Head." "Let us not imagine that Christ is present in the Head, absent in the members; no, He is wholly in both Head and body." [21]

How Christ the Head is joined to His "Mystical Body"

How is this "Head" joined to the body? How does the vital intercourse between Head and body take place? Saint Paul goes into exact details to show that the bond between Christ the Head and His "Mystical Body" can be compared, to a certain extent, in its closeness, to that joining our head and members. Referring to the Colossian visionary, the Apostle portrays him giving himself up entirely to his visions, "and not holding the head, from which the whole body, by joints and bands, being supplied with nourishment and compacted, groweth unto the increase of God." [22]

The first requisite for the body's receiving from the head its unity, normal growth, and whole vital activity, is, then, *holding* or *holding to the head.* Not *holding* or *holding to* Christ, this visionary falls and becomes a rotted branch that must be lopped from the vine if there exist the menace of spreading corruption; to quote Christ's own words, "If any one abide not in *me*, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and

[21] St. Augustine, *Tract. xxviii in Joannem.*
[22] Colossians ii, 19.

cast him into the fire, and he burneth."[23] The *holding to Christ*, our Head, is, then, indispensable for our supernatural life. Fools are they that lay claim to true and living virtue without Christ! They are outside this "holding" of the member to the Head, outside the pale of "love," or, to use pious Christian phraseology, *outside the state of grace*—no act of theirs is meritorious, for them there is no salvation!

It is easy to understand that to the Christian convinced of these truths nothing is more horrible than the state of the soul fallen into mortal sin. Saint Augustine says: "The Christian should dread nothing so much as being separated from Christ's body. If he is separated from Christ's body, he is no longer a member of Christ. . . . If he is no longer a member, he is no longer animated by His Spirit—and the Apostle tells us that whosoever loses the Spirit of Christ, no longer is part of Christ."[24]

As we proceed, we shall see what important issues depend upon this necessity of *holding to* Christ's "Mystical Body" in the observance of the spiritual life, the entire foundation of which is charity—love—"poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."[25]

Function of the members in the "Mystical Body"

In the "Mystical Body" of Christ, as in the human body, the members are various and perform diverse

[23] St. John xv, 6.
[24] St. Aug. *Tract xxvii in Joann.*
[25] Romans v, 5.

functions. "For the body also is not one member, but many. . . . And if they all were one member, where would be the body?" [26] In Christ's "Mystical Body" each member has his own relative importance. As Saint Paul says, each has his own "grace," his own "ministry"; one is an apostle, another a prophet, another a doctor; others are miracle-workers, still others governors.[27] Thus Christ's "Mystical Body" is endowed with all necessary organs.

However, whatever be their rôle, none of these members can function *unless they live*, that is to say, unless they be *ingrafted* upon the Head; this "ingrafting" can be firm and full only in the *state of grace*. For this reason the Apostle, after enumerating God's diverse free gifts to souls, says: "But be zealous for the better gifts. And I show unto you yet a more excellent way." [28] This "more excellent way" is that of *charity*, without which it would be profitless to speak even with the "tongue of angels," [29] and to work miracles, because without charity the member would no longer be "holding" the Head, and would cease to live.

Let us then engrave upon our souls this good advice of Saint Paul's: "Follow after charity." [30] May being united to Christ in the state of grace, jealously guarded and zealously fostered, be our heart's anxiety, our soul's aspiration, our life's

[26] I Corinthians xii, 14, 19.
[27] *Ib.* xii, 27.
[28] *Ib.* xii, 31.
[29] *Ib.* xiii, 1.
[30] *Ib.* xiv, 1.

ideal! Whatever be our earthly office, whatever be our spiritual gifts, the importance of our rôle in Christ's "Mystical Body" depends upon our degree of charity. Without charity, the Christian cannot effect his due and proper co-operation in Christ's Sacrifice; he can indeed attend Mass as an onlooker and thereby benefit somewhat, but he ceases to be its worthy celebrant.

How we become members of Christ

We become members of Christ through Baptism, or, in default of Baptism, through what can take its place provisionally, charity. By Baptism, we are "ingrafted" on Him as the branch on the vine.[31] Through this baptismal "ingraftment" the branch is united to the trunk and lives, or, to use our comparison of the beginning of the chapter, on his entrance through Baptism into the circle of radiation of the "Sun" that is Christ, the mean grain of sand that is man in sin sparkles like a diamond and radiates its borrowed brilliance.

What tongue can tell the beauty of the baptized soul? No mortal tongue—but all can tell the cause of that soul's glorious transformation—Christ's own death, the price set for the restoration of God's glory. When He freely agreed to make, on Calvary, the reparation due the Sovereign Majesty, Christ gained the right to become Chief and Head of His redeemed. Through this right acquired by His

[31] Paraphrased from Romans vi, 5, and Romans xi, 23.—TRANSLATOR.

death, Christ has, then, the power of communicating His life and His grace to His members. That is why Saint Paul says, "Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in His death?" [32] Then, to drive this truth home, the great Apostle adds, alluding to the primitive baptismal rite, immersion, which was a real burial or enshrouding in water: "For we are buried together with *him* by baptism into death." [33]

The new member, then, enjoys a great boon wrung from death by the Head for His whole "Mystical Body." What is this boon? That enjoyed by the Head Himself, Whose lot the member henceforth shares, provided he be not so foolish as to separate himself from the Head by mortal sin—and that boon is a life of glory, without end, without wane, a life called "new" by Saint Paul, termed in Christian parlance *of grace* for those still sojourning in this earthly vale of waiting, a life that shall flash into that of *celestial bliss* the instant we enter Paradise. No other meaning can be read into Saint Paul's words: "For we are buried together with him by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." [34]

Saint Paul's words are perfectly clear the moment we read into them what they would teach us, namely, that, through the cleansing flow of the baptismal

[32] *Ib.* vi, 4.
[33] *Ib.*
[34] *Ib.* v, 4, 5.

water, we have become members of Jesus Christ. Fibers, bones, arteries, nerves, every member of the human body, great and small, is buried in death when the body dies and the head has closed its eyes; but, if the head awakes, comes to life, does not each member awake, do not fibers, bones, arteries, nerves come to life? Enclosing us within Himself, as our veins, flesh, bones are enclosed within us, forced, powerless to hold aloof, to share our destiny, through Baptism He buries us, His Body's organs, in His death for us, and through Baptism He brings us, with Himself, to life again.

From all that has been said, we can understand, then, that, as an entirely logical consequence, everything that is Christ's is *ours*. His death is *ours*, since, by joining us to His "Mystical Body," He communicates to us all His death's gains; His resurrection is *ours*, since we actually share in His life regained; His ascension is *ours*, since, as members, we shall automatically follow our Head to His heavenly home; His Eucharistic Sacrifice, mystical renewal of His death, which is *ours*, is, as we shall see throughout this whole volume, *our* Mass.

We are "in" Jesus Christ

It is easy for us now to give ourselves a satisfactory explanation of our position, in regard to Jesus Christ, as baptized Christians in the state of grace. We are His members, "planted in," "ingrafted in Him," "buried with Him," as our spine, fibers, and nerves are buried deep down within our

flesh. Thus united to Him, we share in *His* very life, because His Spirit spreads from the divine Head throughout the members "holding" It, just as the vital fluid coming from our heart pervades our hands, feet, lungs, and every organ within us.

Hence, properly speaking, we are *in Jesus Christ.* Saint Paul's pen never grows weary of repeating that expression. The Christ Whom the Apostle heralds is not simply Jesus the Saviour in His earthly existence, but *Jesus the Christ*, the glorified Head of the Church, the Mystical Head and Chief, comprising, in completeness, head and members, vine and branches —the actual temple of the Holy Ghost, Who vivifies Him.

In Jesus Christ! Behold our abode! "He that abideth in me," that is, the member *holding* the Head, "the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing." [35]

In Jesus Christ! In other words, deep down within the "Mystical Body," like an organ, tiny perhaps, yet alive and functioning, I have the infinite honor of sharing actually in the intimate life of my Redeemer, the eternal Proclaimer of the glory of the Most Holy Trinity!

In heaven alone shall be known the intimacy and perfection of this union of the members with their Head "in Jesus Christ." The union of my heart or finger with my substance gives only the faintest idea of our union with the Head, for the union of any member with my substance is merely natural, physical, temporary, and effected in dependence

[35] St. John xv, 5.

upon a being of limited power, whereas the Christian's union with his Head in the "Mystical Body" is supernatural, divine, absolutely real as is everything divine, and effected in dependence upon the creating and vivifying Spirit, a union that is destined to be everlasting, a union of love, grace, virtue, and, ere long, let us hope, of infinite happiness.

The human body in its head and members, used by Saint Paul as a comparison to make us understand the "Mystical Christ" is a figure which, far from overreaching its aim in explanation, falls short of the reality. We can, then, merely surmise the depth of meaning contained in these words which we, perhaps unimpressed, have so often heard: "Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member." [36]

Practical Conclusions

Before discussing, in the following chapter, the supreme act performed by the "Mystical Christ," that is, the celebration of the infinite Sacrifice, let us at once draw the conclusions that flow naturally from the great truths just stated.

1. Let us recall Saint Leo the Great's historic words: "Realize your dignity, O Christian soul; you have become a sharer in the divine nature. See to it that an evil life does not drag you back into your former degraded state. Remember *of Whose head and body you are a member!*" [37] What a motive for respecting body and soul, for not soiling

[36] I Corinthians xii, 27.
[37] Sermon I, *de Nativitate Dom.*

the mind with impure thoughts and bad reading, for not following after the lusts of the flesh! Who, having always in mind his *membership in Christ's Body*, would not flee even the shadow of sin, heeding Saint Paul's sane counsel: "From all appearance of evil refrain yourself"? [38]

2. Let us fear nothing so much as being torn from our Head. "The Christian should dread nothing so much as being separated from Christ's Body." [39] Being torn from the Head is actual death, for, from the moment of the member's severance from Christ, communication with the Head ceases, and the Holy Ghost, source of grace and supernatural life, withdraws.

Saint Augustine explains clearly the necessity of holding to the Body of Christ to retain its life and spirit: "Christ's body lives only by Christ's soul . . . dost thou also wish to live by Christ's soul? Then abide in His body." Later this holy Doctor of the Church adds: "Does my body live by thy soul, and thine by mine? As the body of Christ can live only by the soul of Christ. . . . So *hold fast then to Christ's Body*, live by God for God. . . . Such living is timely, salutary, seemly." [40] If we understand and appreciate Saint Augustine's beautiful words, we shall have no greater dread than that of losing hold of Christ. Let us humbly repeat the words the Church has us say at every Mass in the prayers before Communion: "Never suffer me to be separated from Thee!"

[38] I Thessalonians v, 22.
[39] St. Augustine *Tract. xxvii in Joann.*
[40] *Tract. xxvi in Joann.*

3. If we wish to grow daily in appreciation of the dignity of our condition as members of Christ, let us strive with all our might to tighten the bonds uniting us to this adorable Head by seeking after our own personal perfection, and let us put ourselves, like apostles, to the trouble of recruiting new members for Christ. Personal perfection and the apostolate! Our appreciation of our dignity and grandeur as members of Christ's Body shall be measured by our realization of this twofold aim—personal perfection and the apostolate. As Saint Augustine says: "The faithful discern the Body of Christ by not neglecting to become the Body of Christ."[41]

4. The priceless result of our discerning the "Mystical Body" shall be the daily increasing perfection of our co-operation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The essential act of religion, the homage so often paid by Christ to the Most Holy Trinity, cannot, by virtue of our "incorporation" in Christ, take place without us. We intend to show, in the following pages, that the Mass is *ours* because *in it*, with Christ the Priest, *we are sacrificers and victims*.

[41] *Op. cit.*

CHAPTER THE THIRD

THE MEMBER, WITH THE HEAD, SACRIFICER AND SACRIFICED

Wherein it is to be shown that it is the "whole Christ," that is, Christ united to His "Mystical Body," that "offers" the Holy Sacrifice,

That this same Christ "offers Himself" as a whole, that is, that He "offers" Himself and, with Himself, His "Mystical Body," to God,

That, in consequence, the Christian, a member of the "Mystical Body," has a proportionate share in "offering" with Christ the Sacrifice to the Divine Majesty, and with Christ is "priest," and that, proportionately, he is "offered" with Christ to that same infinite Trinity and with Christ is "victim."

The Sacrificer at Holy Mass

Too many of the faithful have the incorrect impression that Jesus Christ, Chief Priest of the Most High, makes no sort of appeal for our co-operation in His immolation upon our altars. Evident it is that only His body, slain but yesterday, and only His true blood, shed but yesterday upon Calvary, are present on the altar at Mass; but Jesus Christ does not offer these infinite gifts without us,

and, likewise, no more does He dispense with us, the members of His "Mystical Body," in completing His act of supreme homage to the Most Holy Trinity.

As the preceding chapter has shown us, through Baptism, Jesus Christ creates members unto Himself; Confirmation increases the perfection of most of these members, and Holy Orders permits a few of them to share officially, but within well-defined limits, in His Priesthood. Provided mortal sin has not wrenched them from their Head, all these members are the dwelling-place of that spirit of charity that is the living and life-giving soul of the Church, Christ's "Mystical Body."

These members, bound to their Head, as branches to the vine, perforce share in the Head's life, hence are united to Him in all His priestly functions. Thus, when Christ exercises His high ministry by renewing Calvary's bloody Sacrifice and offering it anew in infinite homage to the Most Holy Trinity, He is not and cannot be separated from us, from His priests first, His faithful afterward. Saint Augustine clearly states: "The Sacrifice of Christians is being one same body with Jesus Christ." [1] The sacrificer at Mass, then, is the "Mystical Body," Jesus and His members. Now that the "incomparable Head" is joined to His members it is no more possible for Him to perform His duty toward the Divine Majesty without us than it is optional for us to leave one of our organs at home and set about fulfilling some obligation without it.

[1] City of God, Bk. X, Ch. xx.

How is the "Mystical Body's" offering accomplished in Mass?

This question suggests a natural objection to the reader's mind: After the Consecration only the Body and Blood of Christ are present on the altar under the sacramental form. The "Mystical Body's" Head is in the Eucharist, in which, however, as we know, is none of its members. How, then, can it be that, if Jesus Christ is present under the Host and in the Chalice *without* His members, we can say that the faithful truly and efficaciously share in the celebration of Mass?

The objection is easily answered: Christ is alone present upon the altar, a fact beyond dispute, but this presence of the Head is *linked with the action of the members*, in two ways: 1. The offering of the Mass is made by the Church whole and entire, that is, by the "Mystical Body" united to its Head. That this oblation is *hers* the Church expressly and repeatedly declares: "We offer unto Thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation."[2] "And may the sacrifice *we* this day offer up be well-pleasing to Thee."[3] Therefore, in the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ at the altar, it is the whole "Mystical Body" united to Him that immolates Him, that offers Him, and the consequential sacramental presence of the Head *alone*, is inseparable from this Sacrifice offered by

[2] Ordinary of the Mass, *Offerimus tibi, Domine,* Offering of the Chalice.—From *The New Missal for Every Day,* by Rev. F. X. Lasance.

[3] Ordinary of the Mass, *In spiritu humilitatis,* after Offering of the Chalice.—*Ibid.*

the *whole Christ*. 2. Christ, alone present on the altar after Consecration, operates as the *whole Christ*, that is, as Christ united to His entire Church, which is His fullness, indispensable and inseparable. Hence it is that we can say, the moment after Consecration: "*We* offer up to Thy Most Excellent Majesty of Thine own gifts bestowed upon us a Victim which is pure, a Victim which is holy, a Victim which is stainless," [4] and "that as many of us as shall receive the most sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son by partaking thereof from this altar may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace." [5] The whole liturgy of the Mass, as we shall see later in this volume, emphatically acknowledges the existence of this operation that is common to Head and members.

It is, then, the "Mystical Christ" that, through the medium of His priest-members, offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, that, together with all His members, renews in the Mass the offering of Calvary. We, the simple faithful, the members of Christ's "Mystical Body," are, therefore, intimate sharers in Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Pontiff's, Priesthood, since we, *ourselves*, offer the holy oblation by our priests' hands. This is why Saint Peter calls Christians a "chosen generation, a kingly priesthood" [6] and, again, "a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." [7] This

[4] Ordinary of the Mass, *Unde et memores*, after Consecration.—*The New Missal for Every Day.*

[5] Ordinary of the Mass, *Supplices te rogamus*, after Consecration.—From *The New Missal for Every Day.*

[6] I St. Peter ii, 9.

[7] *Ib.* ii, 5.

is why Saint John cries out in the Apocalypse,[8] Jesus Christ "hath made us a kingdom, and priests to God and his Father." The priestly unction that pervaded Christ's whole being and made Him High Priest is spread and diffused "like the precious ointment on the head, that ran down the beard, the beard of Aaron,"[9] in varying abundance and efficacy over all the "Mystical Body's" members, raising them to a priestlike dignity. Commenting on Psalm XXVI, Saint Augustine says: "Our Lord, our Head, has been anointed and His body also—His body, *which is ourselves.*" What happy thoughts spring from this truth! I, poor small Christian soul, weak, despised, am intimately associated in performing, with Christ, the world's greatest act. Proportionately, I am its cause. Personally, efficaciously, I contribute to the Most Holy Trinity's glory and the world's salvation!

The proportion of our personal part in the rôle of Sacrificer

It is evident that the members, all of whom make the offering with Christ, play neither the same part in the oblation as that of the Head, Who, naturally, is chief functionary, nor as that of the priests, who are endowed with the wondrous power of consecrating. In the oblation we co-operate only in accordance with our importance in the "Mystical Body," but *ours is an effective co-operation.* When a

[8] i, 6.
[9] Psalm cxxxii, 2.

culprit casts himself at his judge's feet and begs mercy, his suppliant knees have not the same power to plead as have his hands, his hands as have his lips, his lips as has his heart, yet his entire being—heart, head, hands, feet—is one eloquent whole in his plea. So it is with the "Mystical Christ" beseeching and glorifying the Most High. It is the "whole Christ" making oblation, that is, Christ with His members, Christ and the "Mystical Body," standing erect in priestly dignity offering infinite homage to the Most Holy Trinity. His pleading's power borrows something from each member united to Him in supplication—however small our part, our action has, nevertheless, its influence on the resulting total.

Our part in this infinite homage is, then, variable and proportioned according to the relative importance of each of us in the "Mystical Body." This selfsame importance depends partly upon our office in Holy Church, partly upon the amount of spiritual life infused into us. In her perfection, the Church enjoys unity in variety; since the functions in the unity of the Church are infinite in variety, every member of the Church, according to his spiritual gifts and in proportion to his degree of charity—all dependent upon his union with the Head—has a greater or less share in the oblation; but, whether great or small be his part, every living member of Christ "celebrates" with Christ. Therefore, in all truth, can each Christian speak of "my," "your," "his" Mass, for Jesus Christ willed that it be *ours*, when He joined to Himself the faithful as members of His "Mystical Body."

Do such wondrous facts, invisible, but real, ever enter the realm of our imagination when we approach the altar upon which, with, in, and by Christ, we offer the perfect Sacrifice? Were we conscious of being sacrificers, in proportion to our gifts and graces, would not our feelings during Mass be immeasurably holy? Would there not take possession of us the desire for greater and better knowledge of the Mass, its rites, its ceremonies, its prayers, and the meaning thereof, that we might be enabled to offer, full worthily, *our* Sacrifice?

The Victim

Those inclined to the belief that Christ alone *offers* the Sacrifice of the Mass are, likewise, swift to conclude that He *offers Himself alone* on the altar to His Father. The conclusion is incorrect. As the Priest in the Sacrifice of the Mass is the "Mystical Christ," so the *Victim* in the Mass is the "Mystical Christ." Christ, Head and members, *offers;* Christ, Head and members, *offers Himself.* If He cannot disjoin or tear off His members *for oblation,* He must retain them *for oblation of Himself.* Thus it is that we, members of Christ, have the immeasurable honor, unsuspected by so many Christians, of being victims with Him in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Saint Paul's astonishing statement to the Colossians [10] leads us to an understanding of this truth: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings

[10] i, 24.

of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the church."

Must we, then, suffer for Christ? So far as supplementary debt-paying is concerned, no! As Head, He endured every possible pain and sorrow, although the least of them would have ransomed the world. However, even though the Head has paid, in superabundance, the infinite debt due the Divine Majesty, Christ's members must still suffer, that His "Mystical Body" may hold its members in keeping with the Head. In every well-regulated body perfect harmony reigns between head and organs and between the various organs; so must it be with the Head of the "Mystical Body" and the members, that Christ may be one "complete" victim.

The Church, Christ's fulness, must live her Head's life, and must share His lot. Therefore, since the Head has suffered as a victim, and every day repeats the oblation that we may have part in it, the members must, to harmonize with the Head, endure a certain amount of suffering with Him, under penalty of being separated from Him by the refusal to co-operate in His sacrifice. Indeed, whosoever recoils from the necessary mortification required by sincere practice of the Christian Religion —for example, prayer, fasting, Sunday observance, keeping chaste in accordance with one's state in life, avoiding occasions of sin, and the like—*does not suffer* with Christ, is torn from Him like a broken branch, and ceases to celebrate the Sacrifice with the "Mystical Body," since his aversion to mortification

is equivalent to refusing to be *victim* according to his allotment.

Those members who, on the contrary, generously put themselves into harmony with the Head, thereby acquire the glorious privilege of "filling up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in their own flesh." In a normal body, one member's affliction affects the whole organism: "And if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it."[11] *The Head, then, suffers with us,* not in the sense of the actual feeling of our pains and sorrows, but in that of *taking them upon Himself.* The members' sufferings are literally those of Jesus Christ, the Head, Himself, because Jesus lives in those who are *His;* therefore, it can be said, with Saint Leo, "that the Saviour's Passion is prolonged to the end of time,"[12] that is, so long as a single member of the "Mystical Body" shall remain to suffer here upon earth.

How can Jesus, the Head, now glorified and glorious, "to complete His Passion," *take upon Himself* the actual sufferings of His members? Jesus can so act, because the sufferings added daily by the Church to the Sacrifice offered by the "Mystical Body" form for the Passion a "filling up" *awaited by Christ Himself.* While He was dying upon the Cross, the Saviour, knowing each one of His future members, was offering Himself with them, and them with Him, in thought, as a complete, definite, and willing act of homage to the Divine Majesty. This homage,

[11] I Corinthians xii, 26.
[12] Comm. in Epist. ad Col. i, 24.

foreseen and willed by Christ, a prophetic offering of our own sufferings and mortifications as Christians, is unfolding day by day into reality; what the Head foresaw is now coming into the domain of fact through the *actual sacrifices* of each member of His "Mystical Body," as this member comes into existence. Correctly can we say, then, that each of us, in offering himself with Christ in the Mass, "fills up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ."

The "Mystical Body" is, then, "Victim of the Sacrifice"

Today, the thought of the "Mystical Body" being offered on the altar by the "adorable Head" is too little dwelt upon by the devout faithful, who would find in this thought solid and inexhaustible nourishment for the soul. In our times, fundamental truths are not forcefully enough brought to the attention of the people, whose minds are too frequently distracted by mere details that are remote effects of great theological principles. For example, under the spell of the Fathers of the Church, the early Christians lived more than we of today do upon this very thought of union with the "Mystical Body"; they listened to fine sermons on this truth, whose logical and practical consequences they were taught to recognize.

Saint Augustine never wearied of explaining to his people their life in Christ. Hear him telling them that the "Mystical Body" is the Victim offered to

God as an act of perfect homage—"Since the Church is this adorable Head's body, she learns from Him *to sacrifice herself* through Him." [13] The "Mystical Body" of Christ is offered by its Head. The Head has thought, will, speech; and all the members are taught by the Head to offer themselves with It, as one only victim sharing in all Its greatness. In another chapter of "The City of God," the great Doctor says: "The whole ransomed city, that is, the Church and the Communion of Saints [signifying the "Mystical Body," whole and entire], forms the universal Sacrifice offered to God by the High Priest." [14] The "Mystical Body" is, then, the "universal Sacrifice." Such light on this doctrine gives us understanding of Saint Paul's remarkable appeal: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service." [15]

To this conception of the "co-oblation" of the "Mystical Body's" members as victims with their Head, the Church gives affirmation in various prayers of the Mass. For example, the "Secreta" of Blessed Grignion de Montfort's Mass reads: "May Blessed Louis-Marie, who always immolated himself as a living and acceptable victim, make *our* offering acceptable to Thee, O Lord." [16] Another "secreta" is just as significant: "May these mysteries of Thy passion and death, O Lord, obtain for us that heavenly fervor by which Saint Paul, when he offered

[13] City of God, Bk. X, Ch. xx.
[14] *Ib.* Bk. X, Ch. vi.
[15] Romans xii, 1.
[16] *Secreta,* Nantes Proper, Blessed Grignion de Montfort, April 28.

the same, presented his own body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing unto Thee." [17] Than these we need no stronger statement affirming the co-operation of the members offering the Sacrifice as victims in the Sacrifice.

In proportion to our supernatural importance and to our closeness of union with Christ, we take part as members, offering and offered, sacrificing and sacrificed, in this infinite Sacrifice offered daily by our Head. "Jesus Christ," says Saint Augustine, "offers Himself and, with Himself, all the Saints His members, to the Most Holy Trinity, and, likewise, the Saints offer themselves, and, with themselves, Jesus Christ, their Head—through this wonderful mystery, Jesus Christ, in person and in His members, is, at one and the same time, perfect Victim and eternal Priest." [18] Can a Christian to whom this "wonderful mystery" has been revealed behave like a stranger when he hears Mass?

Our Sacrifices and the "Sacrifice"

The idea of the Victim of the Mass, as just explained, should help to clarify another for us, that of *our sacrifices*. Many a good Christian wrongly thinks that his mortifications, privations, and sufferings have an intrinsic value. Such poorly informed people usually believe that God is quite content with,

[17] "Secreta," Saint Paul of the Cross, April 28.—"Secreta": prayer or prayers proper to the feast, said in secret by the celebrant just before the Preface. Called "secreta" because first in Mass and first in order of time to be said in undertone or in secret.—TRANSLATOR.

[18] City of God, Bk. X, Ch. VI.

even grateful for, what they have "deigned" to offer Him, failing to realize that their own merits are less in God's sight than those of an ant would be in man's—in other words, that their sufferings, of themselves, are valueless.

How shall sufferings take on value and be invested, in God's sight, with the character of "sacrifice"? Simply by being incorporated in the *only* sacrifice, that of Jesus the Saviour. Mortifications are acceptable to the Most Holy Trinity only when they "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ." Christ "alone is holy, alone is Lord, alone, Most High," alone has the right to appear before the Sovereign Majesty in the rôle of offerer. Christ's every suffering is esteemed and accepted, while every other, of itself, is devoid of merit.

Our personal sufferings and sorrows must, then, be borne by us *according to our membership in Christ* in union with our Head and, thereby, co-operating in His great Oblation. Only when massed in Christ's *Sacrifice* can our privations and pains be called *sacrifices*, and then the clear understanding is that they form part of the one and only Homage of praise and reparation for the purpose of completing the Saviour's Passion in the whole "Mystical Body."

Christ's sacrifice, we know, is renewed for us in the Mass. The "adorable Head" explicitly reproduces in the Mass His oblation, which, through the additions to its "fulness" made by the sufferings of the faithful, grows daily toward completeness. It is not hard to understand that it is in the Mass and through the Mass that our pains and sorrows can

properly be said to assume the appearance and name of "sacrifice." The Christian's life, then, with its trials, too often without our knowledge, is centered in the Mass, motivated by the Mass, and crowned with success by Christ's offering of it in the Mass. This is sheer logic; Christ's "Mystical Body" exists, as does the "adorable Head" Himself, only to render the homage of supreme glorification to God through the Mass.

How many Christians surmise this importance of *their* Mass in their personal lives? Evidently without realizing it, they enjoy the fruits of the Sacrifice because they are united to Christ through grace and the life of virtue that postulates the thousand and one daily privations and mortifications besetting the good Christian; thus, in the state of grace, through virtuous living do they honor the Divine Priest and, through Him, offer their sufferings—yet, how frequently do they seek Christ only where He is memorialized, in images, set and formal prayers, pious prostrations, and neglect or forget, perhaps, to look for Him where He acts in person with and for His members, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass!

How our participation in the Mass as Sacrificers and Sacrificed is increased

Our participation in the Mass as Sacrificers and Sacrificed is increased through the increase of our union with Christ. The more of Christ's spirit a Christian has, the more he imitates His virtues, the more devoted he is, Christlike, to the Most Holy

Trinity's interests, in a word, the more sacrifices he makes in union with his Head, the more eminent is his part in the sacrificial act, the better does he celebrate *his* Mass.

Who, of all those united to Christ in Calvary's infinite Homage, co-operated most fully in the offering of the Sacrifice? Beyond a doubt the one who suffered most with Him, His most holy Mother, the Virgin Mary. By virtue of being Mother of God, the Most Blessed Virgin had so clear a right to be called "co-redemptrix" of the human race that, even without suffering, she would have deserved the title, but Our Saviour, Who could have redeemed us without suffering pain, willed that Mary should follow the way He chose to take. That is why He exacted that her participation in the "great first Mass" of Golgotha should be in proportion to the sufferings endured by her at the foot of the Cross—and what sufferings they were! Saint Bernard says: "We are forced to call her *more than martyr*, for her tender heart bore sorrows surpassing by far any sufferings endurable by the body's senses." [19] Therefore Mary who, of all victims, has been the most completely united to Christ the Victim, is closest to Him in His Offering of Infinite Homage as Sovereign Priest.

Furthermore, the great saints, in amassing their treasure of sufferings, have become so intimately united to the "adorable Head" in the renewal of Calvary's oblation that, upon the flesh of some of them, to show to what extent they were victims with Christ, to what extent they shared in His Sacrifice,

[19] St. Bernard, *Sermo de duodecim stellis.*

God has visibly impressed the sacred stigmata of the Passion.

What a horizon of thought and desire stretches before us! We, too, can become important "sacrificers"; we, too, can become restorers of God's rights; we, too, can become active co-operators in our brothers' ransom; we, too, can become perfect adorers of the Most Holy Trinity. How? Simply by being united to Christ's "Mystical Body" through charity and by increasing daily within us His spirit through the practice of virtue and the seeking after perfection, in the joyous acceptance of *all* the sacrifices entailed in realizing the Christian ideal! Ever advancing in union of will, heart, and senses with the High Priest, we shall be more and more closely associated with His Priesthood in the infinite Homage rendered by Him to the Most Holy Trinity.

Conclusion: Co-celebrants and non-co-celebrants of Mass

Since the "whole Christ" is inseparable from His members, every Christian in the state of grace is a co-celebrant with Christ, but the worth of his co-celebration depends on the several modifying conditions. Actually the worth of co-celebration depends on:

1. The *intensity of charity* dwelling in the heart of each of Christ's members. The more one loves Christ, the more closely united to Him he is, the more nearly perfect his co-operation.

2. *Presence at Holy Mass.* It is certain that

the *whole* Church, that is, every member of Christ, takes part in a general way in all Masses, even in those not attended in person, but personal participation is immeasurably greater than this general co-operation, because actual presence at Mass permits of co-oblation that is direct, active, voluntary, and, therefore, most meritorious.

3. *Intention.* The more precise and actual the intention, the more active the co-celebration. For example, the Christian who follows *his* Mass by uniting his will to that of the priest and by joining his prayers to those of the priest, celebrates *his* Mass more efficaciously than he who, although also in the state of grace, assists, with half-distracted attention, at the Holy Sacrifice, murmuring a few vocal prayers to pass the time.

4. The *desire to hear Mass.* Absence not due to neglect but to necessity can be offset by the desire to assist at the Holy Sacrifice. Thus, Christians who have a real love for Christ and feel that their piety is unsatisfied by their one daily Mass when they cannot attend two or three more, can make up for absence by uniting themselves in intention to all the Masses being said that day. This is an efficacious way of taking perpetual part in Christ's great Homage.

Sadly enough, along with the faithful who celebrate *their* Mass in presence or in intention, there are others whose participation in the Mass is only imperfect. These are the poor Christian sinners separated from the "Mystical Body" by mortal sin. These "dead branches" no longer receive the sap, no

longer possess Christ's grace. Nevertheless, the Mass is not useless to them. As we shall see later, they must attend.[20] While the Holy Sacrifice is not *their* Mass, it is, nevertheless, Christ's great intercession for sinners, whose presence at Mass is their most precious pledge of future reinstatement.

[20] Part the Second, Chapter the Third.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

THE MASS, THE VISIBLE OFFERING OF THE MYSTICAL CHRIST

Wherein it is to be shown that the truths explained in the preceding chapters receive solemn emphasis and solid confirmation through their portrayal in the very Liturgy of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Mass is the Oblation reproduced

Every doctrine explained thus far in this volume finds its concrete application and realization in the celebration of Holy Mass, for it is at the altar that Calvary's Sacrifice is renewed, it is at the altar that, through the abiding attention and constant care of the "Mystical Christ," the unbloody but real Oblation is repeated.

Since, then, the Mass is the Mystical Oblation reproduced, the rites and formulas used in Mass must give of the supernatural occurrences in Mass a representation that cannot fail to strike our mental and physical faculties. Since we, the members, with our Head, the Sovereign Priest, really offer the Supreme Homage, it would be unthinkable that our double rôle as Sacrificers and Victims should not be portrayed throughout the Most Holy Oblation of the Body and

Blood of Jesus Christ. For this reason the Church has taken the greatest care to show us in precise terms just what our functions in the Sacrifice of the Altar are, as a careful reading of the Mass prayers and ceremonies will demonstrate. To the doctrinal proofs set forth in the preceding chapters, the Church's holy Liturgy can only add confirmation that is practical, unmistakable, and indisputably authoritative.

Our study of the Liturgy to be confined to matter shedding light upon our thesis

Necessity does not force us here to a complete study of the Liturgy of Holy Mass. Those of the faithful who desire greater knowledge of the history of the Mass, the manner of following it, and the meaning of each of its prayers, can have recourse, with profit, to the many splendid books recently published.[1]

The present volume has its own special purpose—to show the member of the "Mystical Body," that is, the Christian in the state of grace, that Christ's Oblation in "*his*" Mass—so, throughout the following chapters only those liturgical expressions that have to do with this truth will be cited. When the faithful shall have clearly perceived that Christ's Mass is *theirs*, when they shall have been well instructed on *their personal co-operation* in this Act of Infinite Homage, then will they have the true conception of the Sacrifice of the Altar, then will they

[1] See Reference List at end of book.

feel the keen whet to sound the depths of its marvels —and thenceforth they will possess true guidance in the profitable reading of books whose purpose it is to explain the Mass in its other aspects.

What the Mass's Liturgy will show us

The ceremonies and formularies of Holy Mass will establish for us, as clearly as if by definite and positive statement, four truths:

1. That Christ's members *offer* with Him;
2. That Christ's members *offer themselves* with Him;
3. That the secondary priest, visible at the altar, is, at one and the same time, a *member* of the "Mystical Body" participating in the Oblation on his own account, *our official representative*, and *Christ's agent;*
4. That the invisible Christ is the *Sovereign and Principal Priest.*

Our phraseology in offering with Christ

The Liturgy of Holy Mass teems with phrases and statements expressive of the fact that the Mass *belongs to us*, that it is *our Sacrifice.* All these expressions seem to be summed up in the "*Orate, fratres*" of the Ordinary of the Mass when the priest, turning toward the people, says: "Brethren, pray that *my* sacrifice and *yours* may be well pleasing to God."

The Church is not afraid of repeating that "we

offer" the Sacrifice that is "ours" to the Most Holy Trinity. This fundamental truth directs the whole Oblation. At the Offering of the Chalice in the "*Offerimus tibi, Domine*," the text reads: "We offer Thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation."[2] The Liturgy insists upon this "we offer," forcing the priest to voice it again and again. In the "*Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas*," the Offering to the Holy Trinity before the "*Orate, fratres*," he says: "Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation *offered up by us* to Thee," and, again, at the Canon's beginning, in the "*Te igitur*": "We beseech Thee . . . to receive . . . these . . . sacrifices which *we* offer up to Thee."

Is not all this repetition significant? Does it permit us to doubt the fact of our co-operation with the priest at the altar? Nevertheless, some of the faithful may imagine that the priest says "we" for "I," using what is called the "majestic we," the plural employed by the Pope in addressing the whole Catholic world or by a Bishop speaking to his flock—"Our very dear brothers in Christ"—but the Church does not countenance equivocation, and, purposely to emphasize this great truth of the co-operation of the whole "Mystical Body" in the Oblation, has taken care to show that the "we" used comprehends all souls united to Christ by grace.

For example, at the offertory of the chalice by the priest, the Liturgy explains this "We offer Thee" at the very outset by means of a gesture that is equivalent to underlining or italicizing the act's

[2] This and subsequent quotations from the Mass are from *The New Missal for Every Day.*

significance—at Solemn Masses, the deacon together with the priest elevates the chalice and says with him in the same tone of voice the offertory formula "We offer Thee." This "we" then is the real plural, signifying two persons of whom one, the deacon, comes forward to take part in the sacred action as if he were supplying the place of all the faithful. He who would still hesitate to call this "we" a real plural may have his doubts dissipated by certain other texts of the Mass's Liturgy that shed light on the matter under discussion. We find a group of words in the second prayer of the Canon of the Mass, the "*Memento, Domine*" before the Consecration, that states precisely that this "we" signifies the priest and all Christian people offering the Holy Sacrifice with Jesus Christ, the Principal Priest: in this, the "Commemoration for the Living," the priest actually says: "Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants . . . for whom we offer, or *who offer up to Thee*, this sacrifice of praise." A little later, when he extends his hands over the chalice he is about to consecrate, the celebrant says in the "*Hanc igitur*": "Wherefore we beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to receive this oblation which we, Thy servants, and with us Thy whole family offer up to Thee." Is this not a clear indication that the Sacrifice is the work of the whole "Mystical Body" here designated by the words "Thy whole family"?

Immediately after the Consecration, as if to state anew, before Jesus Christ Himself, the fact of union of the whole "Mystical Body" with its "Incomparable Head" now present upon the altar, the Church re-

quires the repetition of this "we" in a statement that purposely particularizes its plurality; from the "*Unde et memores*" we have, "We, Thy servants, as also Thy holy people (that is, the whole "Mystical Body") . . . offer up to Thy Most Excellent Majesty of Thine own gifts bestowed upon us."

The Canon of the Mass ends with the "*Pater Noster*," a new and solemn declaration of the faithful's co-operation with Christ in the Oblation. The very words introducing it, "*Praeceptis salutaribus moniti*," tell us that it is "admonished by salutary precepts, and following divine directions, we presume to say 'Our Father'." Why the apologetic tone? Is it bold to say "*Our* Father"? Yes—God has only one Son, *we* united to Christ, the "Mystical Christ." We are members of Christ; all of us together, joined to the Head, are God's only Son. We are not, by Christ's side, other sons of God in great numbers, but we are members of the one Son, of Him Who alone by right basks in the benevolence of the Trinity, without Whom "we can do nothing,"[3] not even say "*Our* Father."

It is indeed then we, you and I, the humble faithful scattered here and there in the church's shadowed nave intent on the Sacrifice, or even those, a little more remotely, who, absent, still are united to the Holy Oblation in intention, who are the sacrificers of the great Victim of the Altar in different degrees wholly in accordance with our personal supernatural condition, piety, and will. In short, the sacred Liturgy plainly demonstrates that the Mass's Prin-

[3] St. John xv, 5.

cipal Priest offering through the ministry of the celebrant, is the "Mystical Christ," Head and members, in the magnitude attained to this very second by the most recent accessions of Christians in the state of grace. We then, *we* with Him, are the celebrants, in a proportion that is small in comparison with His, but, in the light of our own natural littleness, great, glorious, marvelous, unimaginable!

Liturgical proofs that the whole "Mystical Body" is Victim with Christ

Since priest and Victim on the altar as on Calvary are one, if it is the "Mystical Christ" *that offers*, it is the "Mystical Christ" *that is offered;* in her Liturgy, the Church makes it plain that we are intimately united to the Victim of the Altar and are offered with Him. For instance, the priest mingles a few drops of water with the wine that is to become the Blood of Christ—that water *represents us, signifies us.* Let us hear what Saint Cyprian [4] has to say on this point: "The water symbolizes the Christian people . . . so, in consecrating the Chalice, we are forbidden to offer alone either the wine or the water. . . . To offer the wine consecrated without being mixed with the water would be equivalent to stating that Christ could be offered without us; but only then when the wine and water are mixed and blended, is the spiritual and heavenly Sacrament realized in its fulness."

We, the members of the "Mystical Body," are

[4] Letter LXIII.

co-victims with our Head. This is why the Church, immediately after the offering of the bread and of the wine mixed with a few drops of water, has the priest, who always speaks in our name, say in the "*In spiritu humilitatis*": "Humbled in mind, and contrite of heart, *may we* find favor with Thee, O Lord: and may the sacrifice *we* this day offer up be well-pleasing to Thee." If Christ the Head alone were victim, should we need to ask that "we find favor," that "our" sacrifice be pleasing?

It is not, then, the "Incomparable Head" separated from His members Who is offered, but He and the whole "Mystical Body" with Him. So, to be "acceptable" and thereby "accepted," the "Mystical Body" must present itself, "*offer itself*" in all humility and in full contrition; in all humility, that is, hiding, even cowering, behind Christ; in full contrition, that is, suppressing the least temptation to disunion with Him. In this way, the members of the "Mystical Body" are certain to be "accepted" as victims, since they will pass muster with their Head, Who is always infinitely pleasing to the Divine Majesty. This same thought, "humbled in mind and contrite of heart," has dictated those striking liturgical formulas following the Consecration, in which the Church begs the Most High not to regard the feebleness of her members but the merits of her Head, that He may accept her as a pleasing Victim at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The moment Christ has descended upon the altar, where one would expect to find paeans of enthusiasm in the sacred prayers, the "*Supra quae propitio*" takes on

a surprising tone of supplication: "Vouchsafe to look upon these offerings with a gracious and tranquil countenance, and to accept them, even as Thou wast pleased to accept the offerings of Thy just servant, Abel, and the sacrifice of Abraham, our patriarch, and that which Melchisedech, Thy high priest, offered up to Thee. . . ."

Listen to what one of those who have best expressed this thought has to say on this passage from the Mass's Canon: "At the Offertory, as members of the 'Mystical Body' of Christ, we have been associated in the Oblation of the Host and Chalice . . . we have placed ourselves in the Host like a grain of wheat, in the Chalice like a bit of the grape. . . . Says Bossuet, 'All this makes only one and the same oblation.' Now, if Our Lord, in whom God the Father has placed all benevolence and mercy, is always sure of being accepted by the Divinity, it is not the same with us, *who offer ourselves with Him.* By the side of the spotless Host, there are others not so pure. . . . For this reason the Church begs God to breathe into His children the same good qualities possessed by the holy patriarchs." [5]

This first supplication in favor of the "Mystical Body," which is offered as an evidently imperfect victim, does not satisfy Holy Church. In the "*Supplices te rogamus*," the Liturgy takes up the same thought of humility and petition with a new insistence: "We humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God, to command that these our offerings be borne by

[5] Le Moing, *Méthode liturgique pour assister à la Sainte Messe*, pp. 72 *seq.*

the hands of Thy holy angel to Thine Altar on high, in the presence of Thy Divine Majesty."

Were Christ, separated from His "Mystical Body," alone Victim, would He, the King of the heavenly court Who sits at the right hand of the Father and upon the same throne, be forced to beg the favor of being carried to God by angelic hands? Yet—"to make more pleasing to the Divine Majesty this offering *composed, at the same time, of the Body and Blood of Our Saviour, of ourselves*, and of our prayers, we beg God to have it carried by the hands of His holy Angel to the sublime altar of heaven. We have the fear that our offering may be too imperfect, and so have recourse to the holy Angels that it may ascend more surely and speedily to God." [6]

These petitions of our holy Mother the Church, eloquent as they are of her thought, ought to make a deep impression on us each morning at Mass, for, if the Liturgy insists so strongly on making us pleasing and acceptable to the Most High, is it not, at the same time, inviting us to work with all our might to make ourselves pleasing and acceptable to Him? At all Masses, then, she preaches to us the necessity of sanctifying ourselves. If we will *offer and be offered* with our Head, let us become members worthy of Him. Daily efforts that are persevering and even heroic are worth making to render us more fit to share in the Oblation. The "Secret" of the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, "*Sanctifica*," admirably expresses this necessity of self-perfection imposed

[6] Le Moing.

upon the "Mystical Body," that it may become a victim of sacrifice pleasing to God: "By the invocation of Thy holy Name, O Lord, our God, sanctify, we beseech Thee, the matter of this oblation, and through it make us ourselves a *perfect offering* forever."

The Liturgy shows us the priest's triple rôle

The Liturgy of Holy Mass reveals to us the privileged state that is that of the priest at the altar in his playing of a triple rôle:

1. As *the Head's representative*, he holds Christ's place and renders Christ's mystical act real and visible;

2. *As our representative*, he acts in the stead and in place of the faithful, speaking in their name and offering *their* sacrifice, which is *his;*

3. *As a member of the "Mystical Body,"* he takes a personal part in the Oblation in accordance with his degree of charity, merits, and union with his Head.

The Liturgy brings these three aspects of the Priest's function at the altar into splendid relief.

The Liturgy and the priest's rôle: he represents Jesus Christ

At the altar, the priest acts in the stead and in place of the High Priest, as official representative of the Head to Whom we are united. Throughout the

early part of the Mass, the priest speaks in his own name and in that of all Christian people, but, the moment the prayer "*Hanc igitur*" is commenced, as he extends his hands over the bread and wine, there is a pronounced change of style and tone, for, so to speak, the priest no longer exists—*he has become Jesus Christ.*

Let us follow closely and carefully the words said and the acts performed by the priest; he functions for the Principal and Invisible Priest. "Who the day before He suffered," says the priest-celebrant in the "*Pridie quam pateretur,*" "took bread into His holy and venerable hands"—and, in imitation of Christ's very gesture, the priest takes bread—"and having lifted up His eyes to heaven, to Thee, O God, His Almighty Father"—in imitation of Christ, the priest raises his eyes to heaven—"giving thanks to Thee, blessed it"—in like manner the priest blesses it —"broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: Take ye, and eat ye all of this. For THIS IS MY BODY." It is Christ Who has spoken by His priest's lips, it is Christ Who has acted visibly in the person of His priest. At this moment the priest and Christ make only one; Christ speaks through the organs loaned Him by the priest . . . and it is *His* Body that is present, *His* own, it is He, Himself, Christ!

Before the consecration of the wine the celebrant makes similar gestures in accompaniment to like words. At the words—"THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD"—Jesus Christ has changed the wine into His own Blood. The priest has spoken and

acted as if he were Jesus Christ in person, and the effects of his words and actions are those that would have occurred if he were in reality Christ. Is any other such official representation, duplicated in a truer and more intimate union, imaginable?

Through divine intervention the person of the priest, who is nothing of himself, has concurred in bringing about this change of substances, that is, "transubstantiation." Exactly what has been done by this man who, of himself, is and remains powerless? What has been the exact measure of his astounding official representation? He has given Christ a visible representative who, through the will and intention to consecrate, has changed the bread into Christ's Body, the wine into His Blood. It is the will of the Incarnate Word to be immolated; but where, when? How shall one know that He is being immolated? On what altar? What day? What hour? Where the priest wills, there shall be the Head, present and sacrificing! Like a channel through which flows the flood of infinite power is the priest—the invisible Christ acts visibly through the ministry of His priest! O sublime mission of priests whom the Liturgy shows holding each morning at Mass the place of Christ, our Head, now become visible in our midst!

The Liturgy and the priest's rôle: he is our official representative

The priest at the altar not only takes the place of Christ; at the same time, he is our official repre-

sentative. Although we are offerers with Christ and offerers of ourselves with Him, nevertheless, we cannot perform this oblation of ourselves and by ourselves; therefore, from amongst us Our Lord has chosen those who shall represent human society, and to them He has entrusted the offering, in our name, of the Sacrifice of Praise.

Throughout the Mass the Liturgy makes the priest's rôle as official representative of the Christian people very plain. In fact, at the beginning, he is presented as our delegate, for, after he has, in the people's name, confessed, asked mercy, and sung the triumphal "*Gloria in Excelsis*," he reads the prayer called "collect." Here "collect" has the meaning of "gathering," and is called "collect" because the priest, as official minister and representative of the "Mystical Body," "collects," that is, "gathers" and "binds together" in a sheaf for presentation to God by Jesus Christ the prayers of those hearing Mass. This collect, then, is not a private prayer of the priest at the altar, but a public prayer made in the name of the entire Church.

This intimate association between the faithful and their representative at the altar obliges the priest constantly to speak for us and with us to Christ, Who is our Head, and to the Father Almighty; it is the reason why the priest pronounces in the people's name, as the preceding chapter has shown us, those beautiful formulas in which, using the plural, he expresses the feelings and desires of the "Mystical Body" whose spokesman he is.

The Liturgy and the priest's rôle: his personal rôle as member of the "Mystical Body"

Besides being Christ's representative and ours at the altar, the priest, as one of the faithful, is a member of the "Mystical Body" *offering and offered.* Like all the other participants, as a member, he is held to union with the Head "in all humility and contrition." For this reason, at the Mass's very beginning, he recites formal acts of fear, repentance, and holy joy in confessing his sins, to which the people respond with a like confession.

As he ascends the altar, the priest asks pardon in two prayers, the second of which, the "*Oramus te, Domine,*" contains a peculiarly significant phrase: "We beseech Thee, O Lord, . . . that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to pardon *me* all *my* sins." What a contrast! All the faithful imploring "We beseech Thee" that the sins of the priest alone, who is their representative, be forgiven, be effaced—"*my* sins." Should not the faithful be especially interested in having as official representative at the altar one who, even privately as Christ's member, shall be as perfect as possible? Charity or perfection in the priest is not a condition for validity of the oblation, but what a calamity it would be for Christians to have as official representative a "withered branch" or even one that is half-spent and languishing!

Charity and perfection are considered so necessary for the priest by the Church that she forces him, in her Liturgy, to insist on the purification of his soul

at the moment of the Offertory. In the "*Suscipe, sancte Pater,*" as he elevates the paten and offers the bread that is to be consecrated, he says, "Receive, O Holy Father, almighty and eternal God, this spotless Host which *I*, Thine *unworthy servant*, offer unto Thee . . . for *my* countless sins, trespasses, and omissions." Why this "I," this "my," this exposing of the personality of even so influential a member of the "Mystical Body" as the priest at the altar, unless it be to remind him, before he represents Christ in the oblation of the Holy Sacrifice and before he offers the rest of Christ's faithful, that he must offer himself as a pure victim and that, as priest, he must perforce be the first and holiest in the Oblation.

When the offertory of the bread has been made, the personality of the priest vanishes, to yield place to the "Mystical Body." The "I" effaces itself before the "we" throughout the rest of the Mass until the Communion, when it reappears. The Communion is, in fact, that *personal* act by which each member seals his union with Christ; at Communion the priest and Christ are face to face in a most intimate colloquy which each one of the faithful, of himself and on his own account, ought to strive to make his own.

In the second prayer before Communion, the "*Domine Jesu Christe,*" the priest says: "O Lord Jesus Christ, . . . deliver *me* by this Thy most sacred Body and Blood from all *my* iniquities, and from every evil. Make *me* always cleave to Thy commandments, and never suffer *me* to be separated from Thee." Then he adds, in the third prayer, the "*Perceptio*": "Let not the partaking of Thy Body,

O Lord Jesus Christ, which I, all unworthy, presume to receive, turn to *my* judgment and condemnation; but . . . may it be to me a safeguard and remedy for soul and body."

Thus does the Liturgy reveal to us the priest as a member of the "Mystical Body" sharing, like all the rest of the faithful, in the Sacrifice, but laboring under a special obligation to attain perfect union with Christ. May this lesson on perfect union with Christ which the Church teaches the priest in the daily Mass be of profit as well to those of the faithful who are not priests! Let us never forget that our participation, as sacrificer and as sacrificed, in the Holy Sacrifice of *our* Mass is gauged by our charity, that is, by union with Christ!

The Liturgy reveals that Christ is the Principal Priest

Consideration of ourselves as sharers in the Sacrifice and of the celebrant as Christ's and our official representative at the altar must not make us lose sight of the fact that, behind the screen of appropriate and beautiful rites and ceremonies, One Alone is Principal Actor, *One Alone is essentially the Priest;* that One Alone appeases the Most Holy Trinity, One Alone satisfyingly praises the Most Holy Trinity, One Alone adequately thanks the Most Holy Trinity, One Alone sings as the Most Holy Trinity would hear it the "Canticle of Creatures";[7] and that that One Alone is the *Priest, Jesus Christ.*

[7] *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino,* Daniel 56-58.—TRANSLATOR.

Through the Liturgy the Church effectually impresses upon our minds this great thought which should be dominant throughout our participation in the Holy Sacrifice, during which we must never lose sight of Jesus Christ. Not a single prayer pronounced by the priest in the Mass fails to end in a phrase like "*per Christum Dominum nostrum*," "through Christ, Our Lord." Thus does the Church point out that through Him alone we can and must pass, because He alone is *Pontiff*, He alone is the *Bridge* of approach to God for souls wishing to render Him their homage. This phrase, a hundred times repeated from the beginning of *our* Mass to its end, never allows us to forget the Head without Whom "we can do nothing." [8]

Furthermore, at two places in the Mass the Liturgy puts special stress on the prerogatives of the Principal and Invisible Priest of the Holy Sacrifice —at the "*Gloria in Excelsis*" and at the Canon's end. At the "*Gloria*," after she has praised, adored, thanked the Father, the Church becomes ecstatic in her song to her Head, Jesus the Priest: "O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son . . . Who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us . . . for Thou alone art Holy, Thou alone art the Lord, Thou alone, O Jesus Christ . . . art Most High." Of these rapturous phrases the evident equivalent is, "for Thou alone art the High Priest of the New Law, since Thou alone of our race art Holy, alone art Lord, alone Most High." How often, perhaps, have we sung the "*Gloria*" without sensing the

[8] John xv, 5.

doctrine enwrapt therein, ignoring it as one would a treasure hidden in a coffer one has never thought of opening!

At the end of the Canon no less vividly is this truth of Christ the Head as *Principal Priest* brought to our attention, when the priest, taking the consecrated Host in his hands and thrice making with It over the Precious Blood the Sign of the Cross, says: "*Per ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso, est tibi Deo Patri omnipotenti, in unitate Spiritus Sancti, omnis honor et gloria*"—"Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, *all honor and glory.*"

Jesus Christ is, then, a priest of infinite dignity through Whose adoration the Most Holy Trinity receives homage of praise and glory that is complete and entire. *He,* for Whom everything has been created, Who is Chief and King of all creatures,[9] is the only being capable of procuring for God atonement that satisfies. His is the only voice that arises from the world and reaches the throne of the Divine Majesty, His the only speech eloquent enough to move Heaven. He alone prays and supplicates in the name of everything that lives and breathes, He alone is our interpreter, our advocate, *Our Priest.*

The succession of subjects to be discussed in this volume will give us occasion to return to the consideration of this marvelous and significant passage of the Mass's Liturgy, but, for the while, let us be content with drawing the conclusion of the moment: *our* Sacrifice, which we offer with Christ, derives its

[9] Colossians i, 14, seq.

whole worth and power from the Supreme Priest, and not from secondary co-workers such as we. What honor is ours, members of the "Mystical Body," to be called to offer *with Him* this sublime oblation of the Church, to be associated with Him in His infinite act of Homage, to be established with Him as sacrificers and victims by virtue of His merits which He deigns to share with us.

PART THE SECOND

THE EFFECTS OF THE CELEBRATION OF "MY" MASS

The first chapter, in answering the question, "What is 'my' Mass?" explains the makeup of this essential act of religion that I perform in co-operation with Christ.

The second chapter, "The Glory of God," describes in detail the infinite Homage received by the Most Holy Trinity through the celebration of "my" Mass.

The third chapter, "My Spiritual Harvest," enumerates the untold gains accruing to me from "my" Mass.

The fourth chapter, "Purgatory's Guerdon," tries to show that "my" Mass sprinkles "dew" upon the purging flames.

CHAPTER THE FIRST

WHAT IS "MY" MASS?

Wherein it is to be seen that Jesus Christ, immolated but once, offers exactly the same Sacrifice in the Mass as on Calvary, and that we have the happiness, in celebrating "our" Mass, of being present on Golgotha.

"My" Mass is Calvary

The Mass which each one of the faithful celebrates with Christ is not a sacrifice of varying nature done over again upon the altar; it is always the *same Sacrifice*, that of the Cross, which the "Mystical Christ"—namely, *Jesus united to His members*—offers and presents anew to the Most Holy Trinity.

We have seen that there is only one *Supreme Priest*, that there is only *one Victim;* likewise, there is only *one Sacrifice.* It is easy to understand how there can be only one sacrifice and not two; that of Calvary is complete in its infinitude, for it has attained to the utmost the four ends, infinite adoration, thanksgiving, impetration, and satisfaction, for which Jesus Christ the Priest offered it.

This fundamental truth of the *oneness of Christ's Sacrifice* is insisted upon by Saint Paul: "So also

Christ was offered once to exhaust the sins of many."[1] The same thought is repeated in different words by the Apostle:[2] "But this man offering one sacrifice for sins, forever sitteth on the right hand of God. . . . For by one oblation he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." There is, then, only one Sacrifice, that of the Cross.

However, this one Sacrifice can be renewed

Although no sacrifice exists by the side of that of the Cross, although no sacrifice parallels that of the Cross, nevertheless, Calvary's Oblation can be recalled to God, can be repeated by the Priest-Victim, can be presented anew, that is, "*re*-presented." This renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, this "*re*-presentation," is the *Mass*.

Soon we shall show that perfect identity exists between the Mass and the Sacrifice of the Cross, but first let us draw a most comforting conclusion from what has just been said: "*our*" Mass is Calvary! We are taking part in the very Sacrifice of Golgotha! With Mary, and like her at the foot of the Cross, each day do we offer the true Son of God!

Perhaps there have been times when we envied the lot of Christ's contemporaries and have said to ourselves challengingly: "If only I had been there!" . . . We *are* there with Christ, offering ourselves with Him and through Him, and that same Christ,

[1] Hebrews ix, 28.
[2] *Ib.* x, 12, 14.

still and always, is begging to be shielded from the executioners of His "Mystical Body"!

The Mass is Calvary's exact renewal

In the Mass Our Lord Jesus Christ presents anew the *same* offering and the *same* victim. We cannot insist too much on the fact that the Mass is not an image of Calvary, a facsimile; that it is not a mere theatrical representation such as takes place in the portrayal of events by actors who impersonate and play the part of those no longer living or present. No, the Mass is the renewal of Calvary's Sacrifice, a real renewal, substantially the same in offering and effects, made by the same personage, Jesus Christ the Sovereign Priest, Who repeats the same action, Who renders the same Homage to the Most High. Each of these concepts merits careful study.

The Mass and Calvary: same Priest, same Victim

The Priest of the Mass is exactly the same as the Priest of Calvary, Our Lord Jesus Christ. "Always living to make intercession for us."[3] He is ready to offer again to His Father the supreme Homage through which His priestly office has been fully exercised. He consents to turn the great act of religion that has saved the world to our special account by associating us in it.

The Victim of Calvary is also the Victim of the

[3] Hebrews vii, 25.

Mass. Destruction of the victim at each oblation postulates renewal, but our Victim, once done to death, gained the right first to resurrection, a resurrection that restored and set Him up again in all His perfection, then to immortality: "Knowing that Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him." [4] Our Victim, then, *endures*, infinitely perfect and glorious, changeless henceforth throughout all Masses to be celebrated, maintaining, through His perpetuity, *substantial identity* between the Sacrifice of the Altar and that of the Cross.

We might ask: "How can Our Lord be Victim without dying at each Mass?" The answer is: "Because, to acquire infinite merit and to procure perfect glorification for the Most Holy Trinity, He needed to accept death but once. As Perpetual Victim, in possession of the rights acquired by His *one* death, rights that, being infinite, admit of no increase, He repeats, by renewing them to God, all the effects of His death—adoration, thanksgiving, praise, atonement."

The act of Jesus Christ, Priest and Victim in the Mass, is identical with that of Jesus Christ, Priest and Victim on the Cross, and this act is the offering of the same death. Complete, then, is the identity of Calvary and the Mass—and Christians have *only one Sacrifice*, that of Christ, Priest and Victim.

[4] Romans vi, 9.

By design of Christ what took place on Calvary has been made evident to our physical and mental senses as taking place in the Mass

In order to make His Oblation's oneness manifest, Our Lord, in His institution of the Sacrifice of the Altar, has designedly, in unmistakable manner, reproduced Calvary's drama before our eyes. In His wisdom, He has set up such a copy of Calvary's happening in the very makeup of the Eucharist as to force us to see, by reason of the evident resemblance, the perfect identity existing between the Homage of the Mass and that of the Cross.

Not by chance did Our Lord, in His institution of the Mass, choose two elements of which one, bread, was to be changed into His Body, the other, wine, into His Blood. By their separation on the altar, the bread and wine furnish of the *real* separation of the Body and Blood that took place on Calvary, an image that is perceptible and understandable by even the least enlightened of the faithful. We may say that Our Lord instituted the Mass as a sort of "object-lesson" whose meaning should be within the range of everyone's intelligence.

The fixed meaning of this "object-lesson" is emphatically expressed by the words of consecration. Christ's *separate* consecration of the bread and wine was by design. He could have said over both elements at one time, "This is My Body," or, with one gesture and statement, "This is My Body and My Blood," but His action was entirely different. He

first took bread, "blessed, and broke: and gave to His disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is my body," [5] then, lifting up the cup of wine, He said, "Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood." [6] Separately, then, did Our Lord place His Body under the species of bread, His Blood under that of wine, that Calvary's Sacrifice, in which the Blood was separated from the Body, might have an exact representation.

The Sacrifice of the Mass renews, beyond our sight, that of the Cross

Under the "sensible sign" of the separate consecration of the bread and wine through which Jesus Christ represents in the Mass His violent death, what is taking place, beyond our earthly vision, upon the altar? Jesus Christ, really present under the species, is renewing Calvary's Homage to His Father. His Oblation is exactly the same as that of Golgotha, for the Priest-Victim of the Mass is identical with the Priest-Victim of the Cross. Since His obedience and submission to His Father remain unchanged, His Homage cannot vary; He is always presenting to the Most Holy Trinity the same infinite, unincreasable amount of merits gained once for all by His one bloody death on Golgotha, whose horrors it would be useless to suffer again since they could add nothing to the already infinite worth of the first immolation.

[5] St. Matthew xxvi, 26.
[6] *Ib.* xxvi, 27, 28.

Everything that made Calvary what it was, is again found outlined at the altar in the Mass—Priest, Victim, Oblation—the renewal to the Divine Majesty of the same infinite Homage of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, reparation. We can proclaim, then, that Christ has *only one* Sacrifice, which each member of the Mystical Body can call "his" Mass.

A word on the tenet "The Eucharist is at the same time a Sacrifice and a Sacrament"

What has just been said shows clearly what were Our Lord's intentions when He instituted the Holy Eucharist:

1. Preoccupied with His Father's interests, His thought was to institute the *Mass*, that is, to prolong the act of His priesthood throughout time, that the future members of his "Mystical Body" might perform their primary and fundamental office of giving perfect praise to the Most Holy Trinity through Him, with Him, in Him;

2. Spurred on by the mental prepossession to perfect through increase of Charity His members' union with Himself, the "Adorable Head," He commanded them ("Take ye and eat," "Drink ye all of this") to associate themselves with Him in His Sacrifice not only in unity of feeling and desire, but also by an official act of both interior and exterior union and adhesion—*Holy Communion;*

3. Actuated by love of us and, too, by the knowledge that we should remain faithful adorers of the Divine Majesty only on condition of perpetual sus-

tenance, He deigned to prolong His real presence beyond the duration of the Sacrifice and to remain as permanent guest in our tabernacles.

It is evident, then, that the Eucharist is a *Sacrament* for our use with, from the outset, the view of procuring God the infinite glory proceeding from the *Sacrifice*. Such is the order established by Christ; let us not upset it. We are adorers through "our" Mass, which we celebrate completely only when we receive Holy Communion.

Naturally, we must take into account the immeasurably important *personal* fruit of the Sacrament, but we must not lose sight of the idea that the final result of our correct progress shall be our becoming members more closely united to our Head and, thereby, better adorers, with Him, of the Divine Majesty. We can understand into what error spiritually blind egotists fall in their imagination that Christ is present only for them in the Eucharist; they pray only for their own interests, forgetting God's! We can see how deceived are those who really love the Eucharist but *without* the Mass, those who are eager to receive Holy Communion outside of Mass "to save time"; they discern in the Mass not the authentic, all-potent Sacrifice of Calvary, but the one and only means of procuring consecrated hosts for themselves. . . .

Let us offset the errors of those whose piety needs enlightenment by the true and holy knowledge of that mystery of the altar which is the perpetuated Sacrifice of the Cross, and let us benefit by the Sacrament of the Eucharist especially to strengthen our union

with our Head, with the view of associating ourselves more fully and closely each day with Him in His infinite Homage.

The Liturgy underlines the identity of Calvary and the Mass

The ceremonies with which the infallible Church has clothed the divinely instituted act of consecration tend to make visible as can be the hidden reality which is Our Lord's true and actual Sacrifice.

The Liturgy[7] insists upon the separation of the Body and Blood at the altar, purposely underlining Our Lord's words, to show His will to appear before us, in the Sacrifice of the Mass, exactly as He was on Calvary when He submitted to the "one" death which henceforth and forever was to be effective.

In the Canon prayers following the Consecration we find, in substance, this phrase: ". . . all of us who shall have received the Body and Blood of Thy Son." While saying these words the celebrant makes

[7] Naturally, we make no claim that, from the beginning, the Church outlined liturgical symbolism with foresight and design. The truth is that, although the Canon prayers of the Roman Mass have been, from the fifth century, substantially what they now are, their divinely injected symbolism completely escaped the notice of the Fathers of the Church. We find a hint of knowledge of liturgical symbolism for the first time in the writings of Paschasius Radbert of the twelfth century. Again, in the thirteenth, Alexander of Hales makes vague reference to symbolism. Saint Thomas, after whose time knowledge of liturgical symbolism became common, seems better acquainted with it. It is evident, then, that liturgical symbolism, outlined according to the Gospels, was not manufactured by the Church, but was *discovered* by the Church's theologians through theological analysis—God was the provider!

with his right hand two gestures that are pregnant with meaning; at the words "the Body" He makes the Sign of the Cross over the *Host*, at the words "the Blood" he makes the same sign over the Chalice. In these two actions he determines the sense of the words "the Body of Christ," that is, the Eucharist under the species of bread, and of these "the Blood of Christ," that is, the Eucharist under the species of wine. Thus conspicuously, then, does the Church show by her representation of the Sacrifice of Calvary, in which the Body was *really* separated from the Blood, that the Mass is identical with the Sacrifice of the Cross.

Another ceremony placed at the end of the Canon manifests again and insistently the Church's desire to have us realize that the Mass and Golgotha are the same Sacrifice of Christ. Immediately before the "*Pater Noster*," the priest says these remarkable words, "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory." The gestures accompanying this formulary indicate its meaning in striking fashion. As he is about to begin the formula the priest raises with his right hand the Host above the Chalice as if to place Jesus Christ in the *very posture of Calvary*. On Calvary, He was on the Cross; the priest *is about to place Him there*. As he says, "By Him, with Him, in Him," he makes with the Host three Signs of the Cross over the Precious Blood to show the crucifixion of the Body over the Blood. At the same time, the wording of the formulary serves to call to mind the entire

economy of Calvary whereby the infinite effects of adoration, glorification, impetration, and satisfaction were produced *by, with, and in Him.*

This limitless Homage is addressed to the Most Holy Trinity—to the Father and the Holy Ghost through the merits of the Son. Another of the priest's gestures, through the Church's design, makes us understand, on one hand, that these three Divine Persons are distinct from the human nature immolated in Christ and, on the other, that the Redemption is not confined to Calvary but spreads out from Golgotha and ransoms the universe! The priest, always holding the Host elevated in his hand, brings It forward and outside the rim of the Chalice and makes with It between the Chalice and his own breast above the altar a first Sign of the Cross, saying, "to Thee, God the Father Almighty," then a second, saying, "in the unity of the Holy Ghost," thereby signifying that the Homage of Christ on the Cross reaches out from Calvary, where He shed His Blood, over the entire world and ascends even to the adorable Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. Finally, in bringing this vivid reproduction of Calvary's drama to a close, the Church directs the celebrant, still holding the Host between the thumb and forefinger of the right hand, to place It again above the Chalice, thus putting back the Body above the Precious Blood; the priest is then directed to elevate the Chalice and Host together a little above the altar's level while reciting the last words of the formulary, "all honor and glory." In some churches

notice of this elevation is given by the server's ringing of his little bell.

"All honor and glory"—have they not come, indeed, to the Most Holy Trinity from the very day when Christ's Body was raised on the Cross as It has just been elevated on the altar? Did not Our Lord, Himself, say, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself"?[8] Is not this elevation at the altar a vivid portrayal of the Raising of the Cross?

"My" Mass is, therefore, priceless

Each morning, I, a member of Christ, can be, like Mary at the foot of the Cross, near Jesus offering Himself in sacrifice!

Each morning, I can begin anew to offer the Most Holy Trinity the very Homage of Calvary!

Each morning, I can unite myself intimately to Christ's immolation, not only through perfect concordance of thought and will, but also through the formal act of consuming the Victim, an act consisting, at one and the same time, of the exterior act of adherence and of the interior reception of most abundant graces.

"My" Mass is rich with boons like these! If I but knew "my" Mass as it deserves to be known, how great would be my desire to celebrate it with the priest!

[8] St. John xii, 32.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

THE GLORY OF GOD

Wherein it is to be seen that the Most Holy Trinity derives from the Mass "all honor and glory," that is, infinite Homage, so that the Divine Majesty cannot desire any other and greater adoration on the part of Creation.

"My" Mass gives God glorification of infinite worth

That homage be infinite in worth, its renderer must be infinite. If the renderer be finite, his act of adoration is finite, since no one can give more than he has. For this reason, mere man's homage can never satisfy God in full.

The conditions that make homage infinite are realized between God and Christ. He Who receives the Homage of Sacrifice is infinite; He is God. He Who renders the Homage of Sacrifice is Jesus Christ, finite as Man and therefore, as Man, able to abase Himself before the Almighty's Supreme Majesty; but He is infinite also, since He is the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, Who has assumed human nature with the definite purpose of producing in human nature acts of infinite worth.

The act of Homage through which Christ intends

to pay God, in the most perfect manner possible, the tribute of adoration, atonement, petition, and thanksgiving, is *His Sacrifice*. This Sacrifice, made but once, is unique. It is that of Golgotha, renewed in the Mass. The Mass is, therefore, infinite in worth.

We have seen that we are made participants in the Mass in so intimate a way that Christ's Mass is "ours." Each of us can say, then, that "his" Mass renders, every morning, infinite Homage to the Most Holy Trinity. What consolation, what honor, what exaltation for such small creatures!

The Liturgy itself reveals to us that our Homage is infinite

Those who find it hard to believe that theirs is so happy a state, as members of Christ, as the statements made in the preceding paragraph imply, can find confirmation of these statements in the Liturgy of the Mass. The Mass's rites, the visible expression of the invisible action taking place on the altar, do not fail to tell us of the glory drawn from the Eucharistic Oblation by the Most Holy Trinity. In fact, the very text of the Canon definitely states that the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, receives from the God-Man, the Incarnate Word, "all honor and glory," that is, honor so entire, glory so complete that nothing is lacking.

However, honor and glory to God can be neither entire nor complete without being infinite. An infinite being could not be placated by a finite offering,

for this limited homage, no matter how great it might be, would seem infinitesimal in comparison with the end to be attained—would be so inadequate, compared with the glorification God deserves, that it would not be worth mentioning; but the Homage by which the Liturgy sets such store in the Mass produces, according to the Liturgy itself, to the utmost limit the requisite effect of honor and glory. The Homage of the Sacrifice of the Altar is, then, infinite, and from "my" Mass God draws limitless glorification.

Consequence of this doctrine of "my" Mass's infinite worth

Before such a marvel I must linger a moment for reflection!

I, a mere nothing, am united to Christ as member to Head. Through this Head to Which I am joined I receive the divine life that permeates Christ's whole "Mystical Body."

This "Mystical Body," Head and members, functions—it carries out to completion an act, the Mass, *its* Mass. This divine function, this act is *infinite!* It glorifies God beyond measure! In this infinite glorification I play my part!

What a part it is! Infinite worth cannot be divided because it is not made up of finite quantities. It is, then, not a mere driblet of praise that I give to the "All-powerful Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost" through my Head and Chief, the Man-God,

but "all honor and glory"! Can any thoughts be more ravishing than these?

The four aspects of the infinite praise rendered by "my" Mass

This infinite praise of God rendered in Holy Mass attains four distinct ends, the "ends of sacrifice." This Infinite Homage—

1. Adores God;
2. Shows gratitude to God and makes acts of thanksgiving to Him;
3. Supplicates God, thus fulfilling the duty of prayer;
4. Restores God's Honor and satisfies His Majesty.

For fuller comprehension of the infinite homage God draws from the Mass which—happy thought!—is "my" Mass, we must consider separately these four aspects of the glorification that the "Mystical Christ," Head and members, renders the Sovereign Majesty by means of His Sacrifice.

1. Through "my" Mass God receives an adoration that is infinite

Adoration of God is recognition of His sovereign power and greatness, asseveration of His absolute supremacy over every being that exists or can exist, declaration of His all- and sole-divineness, avowal of His supreme perfection.

That such homage of adoration might be ex-

pressed, God willed that Christ offer His Sacrifice. Under the Old Law, the ritual immolations in the Temple of Jerusalem expressed only a very imperfect adoration of God. Since the Most High could not derive from these holocausts glorification worthy of Him, He ceased to countenance them. Thereupon Our Lord came into the world to offer, at last, the unique and adequate Sacrifice that could constitute complete adoration of God. In this connection, Saint Paul tells us that Christ said to His Father: "Sacrifices, and oblations, and holocausts for sin thou wouldst not, neither are they pleasing to thee, which are offered according to the law. Then said I; Behold I come to do thy will, O God." [1]

The Sacrifice of "my" Mass, which is the Sacrifice of Calvary, is, then, that infinite adoration of God that is perfectly acceptable to Him.

How does Christ, by His Sacrifice, adore God fully?

How the Sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated in "our" Mass procures God infinite adoration needs explanation.

To adore God in full, on one hand the adorer, that his homage may be worthy of him to whom it is offered, must be *equal* to the adored, on the other, that his abasement may be reasonable, *inferior* to the adored. Through intervention of Divine Providence, these two apparently contradictory conditions are fulfilled in Christ; through His divine nature He is

[1] Hebrews x, 8, 9.

equal to His Father, through His human nature, *inferior* to Him. Thus, as Man, He is below God and can *abase* Himself, and, as the Eternal Word, He is on a level with God and can *equal* the Divinity in honor.

Let us now see how sublimely Christ's Sacrifice enacts the homage of supreme adoration.

Christ's human nature is God's masterpiece, His ideal creature, than which no better can be conceived of even by the Almighty Himself, since the Christ is at the same time God. For this exceptional creature was made the world, which is His footstool: "For in him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. . . . And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he may hold the primacy." [2]

It is easy to comprehend how Christ's marvelous superiority over every other creature that exists or can exist wins Him the Heavenly Father's "complacency," [3] and it would seem that this masterpiece of the divine hands, this Christ, this Holy One, this Lord, merits only well-being, but no! He is sentenced, and He must die!

Why must He, Who is Life, die? To manifest to an astounded world, by His annihilation, that no creature, even the most perfect, may by right subsist before the Almighty. Christ's humiliation signifies, therefore, "that the Lord he is God, and there is no other besides him." [4] Christ's death is official, public,

[2] Colossians, i, 16-18.
[3] St. Matthew iii, 17.
[4] Deuteronomy iv, 35.

and solemn recognition of God's sovereign dominion over every creature; it is supreme exaltation of the Almighty's power before which even the purest and most perfect of His creatures must be blotted out; it constitutes the *act of perfect adoration.*

Since the Mass, as we have already shown, *is the renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross,* the same act of Christ's supreme submission before His Father that took place on Calvary is renewed, before our eyes, on the altar. While the God-Man is rendering again, at the moment of consecration, such great Homage to the Most Blessed Trinity, are we, members of His "Mystical Body" adoring with Him, always sufficiently impressed with the majesty of the act we are performing in company with our Head?

2. Through "my" Mass God receives thanksgiving that is infinite

Not only is the Sacrifice of the Mass an act of adoration; it is also an act of thanksgiving. The thought of gratitude is inseparable from that of adoration. In fact, he who abases himself before the Divinity is forced to thank God for everything in the same gesture in which he acknowledges that He has everything. So it was that Christ, while immolating Himself before His Father, gave expression to infinite gratitude. All the evangelists tell us that Our Lord, at His institution of the Eucharistic Sacrifice at the Last Supper, "gave thanks" at the very moment of His transforming the bread into His Body and the wine into His Blood. This

supreme giving of thanks, so insistently repeated by Our Lord on the very eve of His sorrowful Passion, shows plainly that, according to Christ's mind, His Sacrifice on the Cross which was to be perpetuated on the altar, was an act of gratitude to God.

The Church has not forgotten to underline this thought of her Head's, for she has carefully retained Christ's expression of thanksgiving in the very words of consecration: "Who the day before He suffered took bread . . . and, having lifted up His eyes to Heaven, to Thee, God, His Almighty Father, *giving thanks to Thee*, blessed it, broke it. . . ." Then, over the Chalice, the Church has the priest continue: "In like manner, after He had supped, taking also into His holy and venerable hands this goodly chalice, *again giving thanks* to Thee, He blessed it. . . ." Is it astonishing that, since then, Christian tradition has always called the Sacrifice of the Mass the "Eucharist," which, in the Greek, means "Thanksgiving"? In the Church's early years the expression "giving thanks" was equivalent to our phrase "celebrating Mass."

The Liturgy, always so faithful in its handing down of dogmatic truths, reveals to us in solemn and majestic phrases what a sublime act of thanksgiving "our" Mass is. As he is about to begin the Preface, the priest invites those present to render with him, through Christ, the homage of gratitude: "*Let us give thanks* to the Lord Our God," he proclaims, and the faithful answer, "It is meet and just." Then the priest begins the Preface authoritatively: "It is truly meet and just, right, and profitable for us, at

all times, and in all places, *to give thanks* to Thee, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, *through Christ our Lord.*"

One cannot fail to notice the accumulation of words and thoughts used by the Liturgy: returning of thanks is a matter of *dignity, justice, equity,* and *salvation;* thanks should be rendered *always, everywhere;* the only one who can return thanks in a "meet, just, right, and profitable" manner is *Christ* whose Sacrifice is about to be renewed.

The Mass, then, is the act by means of which "through Jesus Christ, Our Lord," that is, through the Head of the "Mystical Body," we, His members, can offer God Homage of gratitude which will suffice since its worth will be infinite.

For what does "my" Mass thank God?

There should be order in our giving of thanks, and gratitude should be first shown for what is most important. In this the Liturgy must be our guide.

In the "*Gloria in excelsis,*" the faithful sing a phrase whose import, which probably is not realized by many, should be a revelation to them in their appreciative piety. The phrase is this: "We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory."

For this, then, must God be thanked—*His glory.* He must be thanked for being Infinite in everything, infinitely good, infinitely perfect, infinitely powerful. This, His glory, is the most urgent motive of our gratitude toward God. In truth, only one thing matters, only one thing is necessary, and that one

thing is God's sovereign grandeur; *from it flows all good to creatures.* Before everything and above everything, then, let us thank Him for *being what He is*, that is, infinitely glorious.

In giving thanks to God *for His great glory*, Christ's member harmonizes his gratitude with that expressed by His "adorable Head" through His Sacrifice, for Christ, Who has true knowledge of God, cannot have, we can be certain, a more urgent motive for expressing gratitude to the Infinite Majesty than that of His measureless glory, the source of all the boons which Christ the Head and His members have enjoyed and shall ever enjoy.

How does Christ's thanksgiving exalt us! It puts us on a plane far above self-interestedness. Many souls yield to the natural tendency of thanking God for only particular benefits received. It is certain that they are doing what they should, for one must be grateful for God's gifts of virtue, knowledge, health, wealth . . . but how many people are so taken up with the gift that they forget the Giver? For example, they thank God for a cure without reminding themselves that His mastery over illness presupposes in Him power, goodness, and mercy so immeasurable that they alone merit praise, homage, and thanksgiving! God's "great glory," the object of all Christ's feelings and thoughts of gratitude, does not often enough have, in our giving of thanks, that first place to which it has right. It is true that, without our knowledge, our acts of thanksgiving made at the Mass are set to rights by those of Christ in such a way, doubtless, that we thank God as He

should be thanked solely through our intention of acting through Our Priest and Head, Jesus; but how much better for us if we learn to put our gratitude, *voluntarily*, in harmony with that of Christ, through Whom infinite thanksgiving may be returned to the Most Holy Trinity "for Its great glory," the source of all good!

3. "My" Mass makes to God supplication that is infinitely pleasing to Him

Prayer must be made to God because He is infinite. The creature, of himself, is indigence forced to beg. Prayer, however, is not only a necessity; it is also a duty arising from the obligation to adore and from the evident fact of our low estate. Adoration is recognition of God as Possessor of All; from Him, then, everything must necessarily be sought. Our Lord reproached His Apostles because they had not discerned the necessity and duty of prayer: "Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name." [5]

Can I pray worthily to God? Yes, in "my" Mass, because in the Mass I am praying to God "through Christ." Supplication made at the holy altar is pleasing to God for two reasons, the personality of the Maker of the prayer and the nature of the prayer.

The Maker of the prayer is *Christ united to His members*, the "Mystical Christ," masterpiece of the divine hands, of Whom I am a living particle, "in Whom," Head and Chief of the redeemed from whom

[5] St. John xvi, 24.

He is henceforth inseparable, "God is well pleased." [6]

Christ's prayers and supplications are those ordained by God. The Christ is God and, therefore, the Divinity's secrets are His, and He knows how God would have His creatures pray to Him, what petitions shall be granted, what pleas refused. We can be certain that everything asked by Christ during His Sacrifice is "borne by the hands of the holy angel to the altar on high in the presence of the Divine Majesty." [7]

The "Mystical Christ," then, fulfils in an infinitely perfect manner the great duty of prayer, and, *since I am a member of this Christ*, my intention, united to His and issuing from His lips, assumes the proportions of an all-powerful supplication bound to be heard by God because it is infinitely pleasing to Him.

This is one of "my" Mass's marvels—through it I can pray worthily to God.

For what does the "Mystical Christ" pray at Mass?

What, then, are these petitions, honored always without fail, which we must make to God through Christ the Head at "our" Mass? Our Lord Himself has undertaken to point them out in the "Our Father." [8] These petitions, always granted because they please God infinitely since they are offered by Jesus Christ in His Sacrifice, are the following:

[6] St. Matthew iii, 17.
[7] *"Supplices te rogamus,"* Canon of Mass, after Elevation.
[8] St. Matthew vi, 9-13.

Hallowed be Thy *Name;*
Thy *kingdom* come;
Thy *will* be done on earth as it is in heaven;
Give us this day our daily bread;
Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;
Lead us not into temptation;
Deliver us from evil.

This is the list of supplications that Christ our Head offers, that I must offer with Him to the Most Blessed Trinity in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Church has seen to it, through divine inspiration, that the "Our Father" is found in the Mass and at the most solemn moment of its Liturgy. Christ deigned to show us how He prays that we may put our intentions into conformity with His. "Thus therefore shall you pray." [9] The text dictated by the "Mystical Body's" Head occurs in the Liturgy of the Mass purposely to have us, the members, formulate our petitions in accordance with the spirit in which they should be made.

What is the spirit that fills all Christ's supplication? It is *that of God's interests.* The characteristic of the articles of the "Our Father," is a marked, impressive, consuming zeal for the triumph of the Divine Majesty in His creation.

What Our Lord demands from "Our" Father, this Father whose *only* Son is henceforth the "Mystical Christ"—that is, Christ joined to His members—is, in fact, His own *Glory* (Hallowed be Thy

[9] St. Matthew vi, 9.

Name), His own *Power* (Thy kingdom come), His own *Dominion* (Thy will be done). These three petitions once granted—that is, once God is perfectly glorious, once absolutely ruling, once thoroughly obeyed in the world—what shall be lacking to the created universe? Is not God everything? God alone matters. When He is glorified, all is as it should be, and creation revels in happiness.

Christ could easily have ended His supplication without further pleading, but, for our encouragement, He very willingly tells "Our" Father the needs of His "Mystical Body," "the fulness"[10] of the only Son, making explicit appeal, for the "Mystical Body," for the gifts implied in the three primary and principal petitions.

His plea is—for "daily bread," spiritual and material (Give us this day our daily bread), that, thus aided and sustained, each of His faithful members may be able to glorify God; for *love* of members of the "Mystical Body" for God (Forgive us our trespasses); for *love* of members of the "Mystical Body" for each other (as we forgive those who trespass against us); for *maintenance of the ties* binding each of the members to the Head (Lead us not into temptation . . . deliver us from evil). The scope of the last three petitions is worthy of notice; by obtaining for us love of God, love of our neighbor, and union with our Head, they put us in possession of all virtues.

Thus to "Our" Father are explicitly stated all the needs of His Son's members, needs whose satis-

[10] Ephesians i, 23.

fying will permit the "Mystical Body" to co-operate powerfully with its Head in procuring infinite glorification for the Most Blessed Trinity.

Let us contrive, then, when we say the *Our Father* in "our" Mass with Jesus the Priest, to enter into the two great thoughts of the praying Christ—God, and His "Mystical Body." All the faithful who, in the spirit of Christ, make supplications such as these to "Our" Father are bound to be heard, with resulting "glory and happiness" for Christ, according to the underlying ideas of the *Pange Lingua*, because thereby the Divine Victim realizes the ends He set for Himself in offering Himself in sacrifice—glorification of God, glorification of Himself, glorification of His members.

Therefore let us learn to formulate not only the requests we make in "our" Mass but those of the course of the day in union with our Head. Let us, by Christ's desire, give them their proper order and importance, that is, let us concern ourselves first with the superior interests of God and then subordinate, in everything, our personal advantage to that of the Divine Majesty; this is the unfailing means of being heard.

How frequently, perhaps, have we celebrated "our" Mass with Christ without giving much thought to the form our appeal should take! Nevertheless, we were praying more or less efficaciously because the Head supplied the defect of intention of a member so taken up with himself that his particular interests absorbed all his prayers. Let us, henceforth,

be eager to pray as we should to God through Christ, to cultivate self-detachment that we may enter into the spirit of Christ. Then shall we know the joys of the divine promise, "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." [11] What peace and happiness shall the abundance of all boons, hurrying of themselves to serve God's glorifiers, gain for us!

4. By "my" Mass God's honor is fully satisfied and atonement for sin is made

The Sacrifice of Calvary, in the blood and horror of the penalty of the Cross, took place because atonement for sin had to be made. To spare us, Our Saviour accepted in our stead the supreme humiliation of the Cross, paying what we ourselves could not pay, the debt our sins contracted in the sight of the Divine Majesty. "Our" Mass, which is the same Sacrifice as that of Calvary, brings us the same infinite ransom.

In the institution of the Mass, Our Lord informed us, in the very words used in the consecration, of the "remission of sins" effected by the Sacrifice of the Cross and of the Altar: "For this is the chalice of my blood . . . which for you and for many shall be shed *unto the remission of sins*." [12] The Church, ever-faithful interpreter of her Head's thought, has

[11] St. Matthew vi, 33.
[12] *Cf.* St. Matthew xxvi, 28.

retained the full and entire phrasing of the Mass's divine institution, and causes the priest to repeat, each morning, the intention of Christ immolating Himself "for the remission of sins."

"Our" Mass, then, carries with it an *unlimited power* of pardon; unlimited, because the Priest-Victim is infinite and His atonement of infinite worth. What no man, however great, could do, the Redeemer has effected beyond all measure, as Saint Paul says: "And where sin abounded, grace did more abound."[13] "My" Mass, then, gives to the Most Holy Trinity this inestimable advantage of restoring due honor to the Most High by permitting the creature, who is an indigent debtor, to pay his creditor, Who is infinitely just and exacting, to "the last farthing"[14] so that understanding and love become re-established between the guilty world and infinite Holiness.

The more united we are to our Head in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, the greater shall be our concurrence in the atoning for all the failings, blasphemies, and crimes of mankind. By us shall God's honor be avenged; by us, in accordance with our measure of co-operation in the Mass, shall be established the Divine Majesty's absolute rule over the world.

What joy for us and what a source of merit, to have done our share in working for our own personal purification, for the ransom of our brethren, and for the satisfaction of eternal Justice!

[13] Romans v, 20.
[14] St. Matthew v, 26.

Conclusion: "My" Mass is for me the work, beyond compare, that must always come first

The preceding pages must certainly have been effective in rousing the enthusiasm of faithful Christian hearts. In reading them they may have had, at moments, the temptation to say: "This is altogether too wonderful! How can I, a poor little creature, co-operate in a work of this importance? How can I adore God infinitely? Thank Him wholly and entirely? Pray to Him perfectly? Satisfy His honor completely?" Nevertheless, it is true; each member of Christ, celebrating the Holy Sacrifice with his Head, attains these ends which are, however, infinitely distant and beyond his range so far as his natural ability is concerned.

What an accumulation of marvels: the marvel of union of the member with the Head, marvel of the renewal of the Sacrifice on the altar, marvel of the celebration of this Sacrifice by the "Mystical Christ," Head and members, marvel of the glory which the Divine Majesty receives from the Oblation!

"My" Mass appears to me, in my existence, as the great act around which all my thoughts and efforts should center. In truth, whoever celebrates "his" Mass has done more for God's honor and mankind's good than have the generals, magnates, captains of finance, and geniuses of all time. The whole world, in eager pursuit of mere earthly ends, stirs up only a bit of dust, while the Christian, in offering "his" Mass, builds for eternity.

While co-operating in the Sacrifice of the Altar, Christ's member is filling his life to repletion, is attaining the end for which he was created, is actually gaining his supernatural reward, which shall be his in infinite recompense, for God is never niggardly in requiting those laboring for His Glory.

No human tongue can tell the infinite glories of "our" Mass. Long meditation, constant recurrence to the truths emphasized in this book, reflection on the eloquent texts of the Liturgy of the Mass, above all, fervent prayer in union with Jesus the Priest, our Head, and communion with Him in His Sacrifice through the reception of the Sacrament of the Altar, shall be able to lead us, little by little, towards a practical comprehension of "our" Mass's grandeur, shall permit us to realize "how sweet" it is to participate with Christ in the celebration of the one Sacrifice that gives infinite glory to God!

Then, when we shall have commenced to glimpse the truth, we shall marvel, not because we have said "our" Mass with, in, and by Christ, but because we have said it with so little fervor, because we have celebrated it even coldly, especially because we have neglected to say it for so long a time. . . . Great shall be our regret at the reflection that we have missed the chance to crown our lives with untold worth by the daily celebration of "our" Mass, at the thought that we might have brought down upon our heads a shower of graces, instead of His reproaches, from a God infinitely satisfied with us. Nevertheless, this is not the hour for despair, for all is not lost. In our affliction at the thought of our

empty lives, we must remember that we have at hand the means for filling them—"our" Mass. Today, as yesterday and always, it procures infinite glory for God; it is always at our disposal; by means of it we can satisfy to repletion God and ourselves.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

MY SPIRITUAL HARVEST

Wherein it is to be seen that "my" Mass is the source of my every spiritual need—remission of sins, increase of grace, obtainment of wants—and that of all the salutary works I can do here on earth "my" Mass is, beyond comparison, the most profitable.

To me "my" Mass is gainful only finitely

From the infinite worth of "my" Mass I can draw only finite gain. Just as from the sea, which to me seems boundless, I can take only a little water, as much as the tumbler, bucket, or cask used can hold; so, from "my" Mass, which is infinitely advantageous to God, I receive grace only in proportion to my soul's spiritual condition.

It is easy to see that so small a being as I cannot enclose within myself abundance that is overflowing; so, when I celebrate "my" Mass, I take from it only *what I can*, nothing more. At each Oblation, I drink a few drops, a mouthful, a deep draught, but of God I can "drink" only according to my drawing and holding capacity.

Thus "my" Mass, infinite in itself, has, in my regard, only finite effects.

Consequence for Christ of the fact that to me "my" Mass is gainful only finitely

The statement just made as to the *finiteness of my spiritual profit* from "my" Mass makes understandable some of the chief motives of the Divinity in instituting the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Finite advantage can be increased by adding to it other gains; but, to ensure these additional gains, one is in perpetual need of the possibility of tapping their source. Our spiritual fortune grows by repetition. Our Lord, in His eagerness to increase His members' spiritual wealth, felt obliged, for our benefit, to multiply occasions for profiting by His merits. One of His motives for prolonging Calvary, for renewing It, is to afford us the chance to celebrate the Oblation with Him as often as we will and, each time, to increase *our profit*, to add to our *spiritual gain.*

Such is the Mass's function in regard to the members of the "Mystical Body"—offering opportunity for ever-increasing participation in Christ's merits. However, to ensure the possibility of the proper distribution of the merits of Jesus Christ among His members, the Divine Majesty felt constrained to see to it that the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Altar should be within reach of all the faithful. There was to be not merely *one Mass* in just *one Temple*—in Jerusalem or Rome, for instance—but *Masses everywhere and always.*

If waters had flowed only for a time in the world's beginning, their benefit to mankind would be a vague

memory unable to slake the thirst of the living. Again, if only one stream were always flowing, and always only in one region, how could men of other lands quench their thirst? In Golgotha the great river of Christ's merits has its source. Through the Mass it inundates all lands and all ages with His grace, and gives all souls of all nations, all their days, to drink.

We can see, now, why Christ instituted the Mass—on the one hand, to prevent His Sacrifice from *being forgotten* by men as an event of the ancient past or from *being merely faintly remembered* and not easily profited by; on the other, to provide for the *distribution* of the Redemption's benefits among all the "Mystical Body's" members according to needs of hour and circumstance, in every corner of space and every instant of time. These are the reasons why Calvary's bloody Sacrifice is renewed in "my" Mass.

Consequence for me of the fact that to me "my" Mass is gainful only finitely

While there has resulted for Christ, from the impossibility of our being infinitely surfeited, the necessity of perpetuating Calvary amongst us, from this same impossibility most important consequences have come to us:

1. *My participation in Christ increases with each new Mass that I celebrate.*

As often as we shall offer the Holy Sacrifice, so often shall we receive its fruits, to increase our spiritual wealth. Such was the understanding of

those saints who manifested so ardent a love for "their" Mass. The plowman, Saint Isidore, incurred the anger of his master through his morning absences and merited having angels take his place in the field while he was at church. The domestic, Saint Zita, found that her menial tasks had been done by heavenly spirits while she was rapt in ecstasy at Holy Mass. In spite of her burdensome duties, Saint Margaret Mary Postel attended every Mass celebrated in her community's chapel. When an inconsiderate parish priest had unjustly refused Blessed Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort permission to say Mass in his church, the saintly man traveled on foot the whole morning in haste to reach a church where he could say "his" Mass before noon.

2. *My participation in Christ increases, in proportion, through the celebration of "my" Mass, to the increase of my intimacy with Him.*

Does it seem possible that our participation in Christ can increase with each Mass? If one Mass alone challenges our receptivity, how, indeed, can a Mass that may follow add anything? Dipping a glass that is actually full of water into the ocean cannot add a drop. If our receptivity were like that of the glass, that is, always the same, this would be a correct observation, but upon our souls "our" Mass has more than one effect—at the same time that it overwhelms our souls, it enlarges their spiritual receptivity!

As we shall see presently, the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice increases charity in us, strengthens our virtue, routs our sins, in a word develops our

supernatural inclinations, thereby creating within us a greater capacity to receive God. It behooves us, therefore, to attend Mass whenever we can.

To frequent attendance, however, must be added quality of attendance. While it is salutary to offer "our" Mass as often as we can, it is no less urgent that we offer it in the *best possible way*, that it may ever enlarge our supernatural capacity to receive. Since the Mass is infinite, we shall never drain it dry, regardless of the depth of the abysses there are in our souls for it to fill.

3. *My participation in Christ is not lessened by the number of those who celebrate with me.*

Although the gain I derive from "my" Mass is finite, it is not lessened or increased in accordance with the number of those sharing in Christ's merits with me—an immense congregation before the altar does not diminish it, a small crowd does not augment it. Whether I am alone in my celebration of "my" Mass or hundreds of the faithful surround me, celebrating with me, my participation in Christ is always gauged by my spiritual receptivity, not by the density of the throng in attendance.

In fact, since the Mass is infinite, it can overflow all vessels presented for filling. When each of them is full, the merits of Christ are not lessened, since they are inexhaustible, and there always remains the wherewithal to inundate the universe. Is not a great number of co-celebrants, rather, a reason for Christ, pleased by the fervor shown by so important a portion of the "Mystical Body," to obtain from His Father more abundant fruits for distribution?

The meaning of "my spiritual fruit"

After the Mass has ascended to heaven to give glory to God, it falls to the earth again in showers of varied gain.

In the first place, it procures "general fruit" for the Church because, in fact, every Mass is said "in the name of the Church." From all the Masses celebrated throughout the world divine favor flashes in diffused rays over the whole "Mystical Body," granting it more and more abundant graces and increasing the number of its members by the conversion of infidels and the return of sinners. The Church is the special beneficiary of the Mass, which is *its* work performed through the ministry of the priest, *its* representative.

Secondly, the Mass produces "special" or "ministerial fruit"—that in response to the intention of the celebrant applying the Mass according to his will. This fruit is the gain of him who has the Mass said, or for whom it is said. Presently we shall speak of this fruit.

Finally, the Mass brings to members of the "Mystical Body" celebrating it a fruit called "personal," because it is the personal gain of each of the co-celebrants. It is the treasure of members celebrating *their* Mass that is acquired by the very fact of their co-operation in the Oblation. In the same way that sacramental effects, such as remission of sins, increase of grace, imprinting of character, belong strictly to those receiving a Sacrament, "my"

Mass's spiritual profits belong to me. These *personal fruits* will now be discussed.

"My" Mass's personal fruits: 1, Increase of Sanctifying Grace

The first fruit produced for the "celebrant" by "his" Mass is the increase in him of sanctifying grace, called also "charity" or "love." Of this growth in divine life there are two causes: (1) the member's co-operation with His Head, (2) the very act resulting from this co-operation.

1. *My co-operation with Christ* in the celebration of Mass gains me an increase of vitality. Like that of every other organism, the "Mystical Body's" vitality depends upon the observance of the truism that health is maintained and increased through co-operation between head and organs. In the human body, the active member's sturdy development is due to its better blood circulation and more strenuous muscular exercise; in the "Mystical Body," the member co-operating with the Head in the wondrous act of the Immolation of the Altar partakes each time in greater abundance of the sap of *grace* descending from the Head.

Let us remember that the flow of grace is not the same for every member offering with Christ, but that it varies in fulness in accordance with each member's co-operation. Some of the faithful co-operate with the Head more eagerly, disinterestedly, effectively, and devotedly than others. It is sheer justice that the always generously distributed fruit

be apportioned according to the members' will and effort. Let this reflection serve to incite our readers to strive daily to increase the perfection of their union of mind, heart, and will with their adorable Head.

2. *The very act resulting from my co-operation with Christ is a* potent cause of increase of sanctifying grace in my soul. In the preceding chapter it was shown that "my" Mass procures praise, thanksgiving, reparation for God; that Divine Majesty, adored by the "Mystical Christ," is satisfied in full and can exact no more from His creature, from whom He has received complete Homage. When I have thus perfectly glorified an infinitely just and good God *in* and *by* Christ, I cannot help being pleasing to Him. In its original sense "pleasing to God" meant "gracious," that is *endowed with grace.*

In the celebration of "its" Mass the "Mystical Body," of which we form a living part, participates, therefore, not only in Christ's Oblation but also in all the advantages which that Immolation has gained for Christ. On Calvary Christ acquired countless merits that won Him immortality, glory, and an eternal kingdom at the right hand of His Father. That part of the "Mystical Body" that has already reached heaven is now, with its Head, in enjoyment of all these advantages. The part that makes up the Militant Church on earth is granted the possession of these same prerogatives under the form of *sanctifying grace*, which, the instant we enter Paradise, shall flame into the glorious beatitude of the "Mystical Body," shining like a Sun that has no

equal, whose luminous and illumining center is Christ.

By his celebration of "his" Mass, then, Christ's member piles up precious treasure. Since there is no external sign of this inner wealth, the member is tempted to think, as he leaves the church, that he goes as poor as he came. Let him withstand the earthly and illusory temptation to believe only what he sees—let him open the eyes of faith, and he shall see how profitable it is for him to offer "his" Mass.

"My" Mass's personal fruits: 2, Advance in Virtue

Two beings who co-operate ardently and fervently in the same work acquire, in the end, complete unity of ideas and desires. Thus, for example, Christian husband and wife, in their common interest in family affairs, succeed in blending their souls into one.

This unity of thought and will, which is the ideal of Christian marriage, Christ wishes to have with His "Mystical Body," which is the Church, and, consequently, with each of His members who make up the Church. So strongly did Christ feel upon this point that Saint Paul could say: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and delivered himself up for it. . . . For no man ever hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the church; because we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones . . . This (the husband's love for his wife become his

flesh) is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the church." [1]

Jesus Christ is, then, especially solicitous for "the flesh of His Mystical Body," that is, for His members who show their co-operation with Him by their Christian way of life and, particularly, by their participation in the eminent act of His Holy Sacrifice. He wishes us to be only one heart and one soul with Him; He longs to melt us with Him into the utmost intimacy of thoughts, desires, will. He would have us seek what He loves, fly what He hates, even at the cost of greatest sacrifices. In other words, He breathes into us *regard and yearning for all virtues.*

It is, then, impossible for the faithful soul to celebrate "his" Mass worthily, attentively, and devoutly without making marvelous and rapid progress in Christian perfection. Is not the very Act of Oblation, in co-operation with Jesus Christ, the occasion for practicing under the most favorable conditions the very virtues Christ wishes to develop within us?

The Eucharistic Oblation puts *faith to the test*, as Saint Thomas Aquinas reminds us in the "*Adoro te devote*":

Sight, touch, and taste in Thee are each deceived;
The ear alone most safely is believed:
I believe all the Son of God has spoken,
Than Truth's own word there is no truer token.[2]

The Sacrifice of the Altar is considered a "mys-

[1] Ephesians v, 25 *seq.*
[2] *New Missal for Every Day*, by Rev. F. X. Lasance.

tery of faith," as the priest states at each Mass in the middle of the divine formula ("HIC EST ENIM CALIX SANGUINIS MEI, NOVI ET AETERNI TESTAMENTI: *MYSTERIUM FIDEI*"), that changes the substance of the wine into Christ's Blood, permitting the species to remain. Is it not meet that the "Mystical Body," kneeling at the Elevation in adoration of its immolated but invisible Head, should be rewarded for its humble adhesion of spirit by a notable increase of faith?

Celebration of "his" Mass is, for Christ's member, perfect practice of the *virtue of hope*. It is in the expectation of all spiritual and temporal boons necessary to salvation that the member unites himself to Jesus the Priest to offer infinite Homage with Him. The member of the "Mystical Body" knows that in the Mass he already possesses all these boons since he participates, in the Mass, in Christ, Who keeps them at His disposal, to be imparted to His faithful, according to His will.

It would be superfluous to show that the celebration of "his" Mass is, for the member of Christ who knows how to unite himself to the Head, a perfect act of *love of God* which, taking on infinity before the Divinity, returns to him an incalculable increase of "charity."

The theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, never develop in the soul without introducing all the other virtues. Therefore, the member celebrating with Christ the Head soon shares in His horror of sin, His love of Justice, His spirit of religion, obedi-

ence, mortification, purity. . . . "His" Mass makes the believer a healthy, strong, active, living member of the "Mystical Body," in other words, a perfect Christian.

"My" Mass's personal fruits: 3, Remission of sins

"My" Mass remits my sins! What joy for the Christian, celebrating with Christ, to know that this Sacrifice he is offering has of itself the power to *remit all, even mortal, sins!*

The Mass is the Cross! On Calvary the Supreme Priest offered His Father infinite atonement for all the sins of the world. The Mass which He instituted, as we saw at the beginning of the chapter, to distribute everywhere, for all time, and upon all men the effects of the Redemption, brings to each member of the "Mystical Body," therefore, remission of his sins.

This very truth, furthermore, the Divine Lamb, Christ, laden with all the sins of the world, took care to tell us, and the Church is concerned with repeating to us—every morning, at the Mass, we hear the priest saying Christ's own words: "This is the chalice of My blood . . . which shall be shed *for the remission of sins.*"

This statement made by Christ meant something! The Church takes this as she takes all Christ's statements, at its face value, that is, to mean what it meant for Christ. One effect of the Sacrifice of the Mass is, then, the remission of all sins without dis-

tinction as to kind and gravity. "My" Mass is offered first of all to efface *my sins*. Therefore let each member of the "Mystical Body" repeat every morning with the celebrant at the Offertory: "Receive, O holy Father, almighty and eternal God, this spotless host, which I, Thine unworthy servant, offer unto Thee . . . for my countless sins, trespasses, and omissions . . . that it may avail . . . me . . . to salvation, unto life everlasting."

How "my" Mass effaces my sins

From what has just been said it would be folly to conclude that the Mass supplants and suppresses the Sacrament of Penance, that is, that it removes sin from our souls without further formality, doing away with the necessity of our going to confession.

Let us remember that reception of the Sacrament of Penance, or, at least, desire to receive it, is absolutely necessary for the remission of sins. The sinner who, through an act of perfect contrition, is reconciled to God in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, receives grace only if he has the intention (implicit, at least) of telling his faults in confession. The Mass, however unfailingly it remits all sins, cannot, then, be substituted for the Sacrament of Penance and *cannot replace it.*

How, then, does the Mass obtain the *certain* pardon of all our sins? By its production of wondrous effects: first, it appeases God and, because of the infinite Homage it has given Him, changes His just wrath into mercy; secondly, through the interces-

sional power of the immolated Head praying for His members, it draws upon the sinner graces that urge him to repent. This is the meaning of the Council of Trent's statement beginning "*Huius quippe oblatione*":[3] "Appeased by the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, the Lord, granting grace and the gift of repentance, pardons even the greatest sins and crimes."

Let the sinner not reject this gift of true sorrow assured to him by attendance at Holy Mass, but let him yield to grace and, with certainty of pardon, seek the priest, who, in absolving him, will apply definitely the fruits of "his" Mass, that is, purification from mortal sin in consequence of the grace of repentance given him at the infinite Sacrifice of the Altar.

Weighty are the consequences of this truth:

1. *Sinners must be induced to go to Mass.* Going to Mass is the best means, the only truly infallible means, to effect their conversion of heart. But what sort of participation in the Holy Sacrifice can they have? Evidently, the efficacy of mere physical presence—conceded, for example, "to oblige" or "to keep the peace"—would probably be slim; and such attendance could hardly be called "participation" in the Oblation. However, if we take into consideration the infinite power of intercession which Christ immolating Himself has before the Divine Mercy, we must acknowledge that even such attendance at Mass as this can have some supernatural effect; that it is, at least, the first short step toward conversion. This

[3] Sess. XXII, ch. 2.

sort of presence at Mass is, then, the *minimum* to seek to attain. For example, should a husband claim he no longer believes, his Christian wife should be cheerful and encouraging—and conduct him to Mass every Sunday.

Once this acquiescence springing from purely human amiability has been secured, a further step may be taken—the transforming of this acquiescence into practical piety by inducing the sinner to attend the Holy Sacrifice with the *intention of performing an act of Religion.* Assent to this second step, even though the assent be vague and confused, suffices to effect participation in the Oblation, and this Mass becomes, in a small way, "his" Mass for the sinner. In regard to the "Mystical Body," he is considered a dead member, but one, nevertheless, united to the vine again by faith. If his disposition is not, as yet, such as can draw upon his soul grace of immediate and sincere repentance, his hearing Mass in this way will one day dispose him to receive this gift.

If one has the happiness of inducing a sinner, however far from the "Mystical Body" his faults have placed him, to *have the will formally to participate in the Holy Sacrifice* to the best of his ability by offering the Mass with Christ expressly, then the Mass will, in a wise God's own good time, unfailingly stir the guilty soul to seek the grace of absolution. Those who desire wandering members' return to Christ should strive to secure from them this sincere and efficacious "participation."

2. *Masses must be said for the conversion of sinners.* If sinners can be induced merely to *attend*

Mass, another means to make them share in the effect of remission of *all* sins through Christ's Sacrifice must be taken—Masses must be said for their intention. We shall see, presently, that a *special fruit* is reserved for those *for whom* the Holy Sacrifice is offered. When they receive this fruit, members dead through sin are experiencing the benefit of the pardoning power possessed by Christ's merits, and sooner or later their hardness of heart must yield to the pleas for their conversion.

Let us not hesitate to have the Holy Mass offered for sinners, for this is the greatest of all the spiritual works of mercy. Why is it that members of the "Mystical Body," in their praying for the grace of return to God for their loved ones, so often forget that they possess in the Oblation of Christ the very remission of sins? Without neglecting their customary devotions and mortifications, without eliminating usual prayer, without relaxing in practice of virtue, in union with Christ, these members would manifest not only common sense but wisdom if they would but vastly increase the efficacy of their efforts by having the Immolation of the Altar celebrated frequently for their beloved wanderers from the path of righteousness.

"My" Mass's personal fruits: 4, Satisfaction for my sins

After sin has been remitted, we must, nevertheless, stand the consequences of our erring. If a father pardons his prodigal son and reinstates him in the

home, that son must, however, work hard to expiate his offenses. Likewise, the pardoned sinner remains charged with a debt before God. What shall pay it? The Mass. . . . What, in particular, shall pay my debt? "My" Mass.

The Cross presented God, and the Mass *re*-presents Him, with all the merit and atonement of the Infinite Priest. The Mass, then, puts into the Divine Majesty's hands the wherewithal, and more, to pay the debt piled up by all the sin in the world; it constitutes a perfect and total *reparation* of the honor due God; it restores what the sinner's malice tried to destroy—Divine Awfulness.

The Mass, sufficient to pay all arrears, must become "mine" to efface my debts. In fact, although Jesus Christ poured into His Father's bosom the wherewithal to cover the accounts of all His debtor members, nevertheless, the Divine Majesty exacts that each of them clear his own account from the fund that is for the use of all. Altogether too easy and lax a situation would it be if the guilty could lull themselves into security by saying: "We need not budge, for the Saviour has paid all." That is the heresy of those Protestants who hold that, since Christ gave more than the necessary satisfaction for all possible sins, we may offend God as much as we please—provided we believe firmly in the Redemption's infiniteness!

Let us, then, as debtors, audit our account after absolution and, *ourselves*, borrow from the abundance of Christ's atonement, through *our* Mass. If

we shall celebrate it worthily, that is, in intimate union of intellect and will with our Head, Purgatory's pains are struck off and we stand clear before the Sovereign Judge.

"My" Mass's personal fruits: 5, Obtainment of favors

We have seen that Christ the Head, in His Immolation, directs pleas to God in the "Pater Noster" that are urgent and sure to be heard. These pleas are first for God's Glory, Power, and Dominion, then for the "Mystical Body's" needs—its spiritual and material sustenance, its charity toward God, charity of its members for one another, the lasting endurance of their union with the Head.

Since the members and the Head make only one in the offering of the Mass, of which Jesus Christ is Priest and Victim, the petitions made by the members at the altar, in union with those made by the Head, *are acceptable to the Divine Majesty and bound to be granted.* This sure reliance upon the outcome of our prayers is not one of the least of "our" Mass's privileges.

The cause of "our" Oblation's potency is evident. Through His Sacrifice, Christ has acquired the right to intercede for those whom, by His redemption, He has joined to Himself as members. As Head, therefore, He is empowered to petition for them. On the other hand, this Christ the Head, Who pleads for His members is, at the same time, the God Who grants.

When He supplicates, He is *certain* of obtaining what He asks, because He knows what God's will for us is. This is the reason why every plea made by a member of Christ at "his" Mass is heard without fail—*provided that plea pass through the lips of Christ.*

How shall we formulate our supplications?

Herein lies the secret—that the members be heard, they must formulate their supplications according to the spirit of their Head. Here, as everywhere and in everything, union between Head and member is necessary. When Christ and the Christian pray together, God cannot refuse; when there is a difference between Christ's prayer and that of His member, it is clear that Christ's must prevail since His is always in accordance with the tenor of the Divine Will.

The Church recalls to us frequently in her Liturgy the great principles of true prayer governing the "Mystical Body" "by, in, and with Christ." For example, she has us say in the collect of the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost: "Lord, that Thou mayest grant their desires to them that seek, make them to ask for those things only that are pleasing to Thee."

How shall we know what is "pleasing" to God? By observing our Head in prayer and imitating Him. "Thus therefore shall you pray," said He . . . and immediately He makes us pray for God's Glory, Power, and Dominion. Therefore, in order to pass

through Christ's lips, every prayer in "our" Mass must be dominated by our concern for the divine interests. Christ's command is, "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God."[4] The first end of the Mass, as we have seen, is "praise of God" through perfect adoration, entire thanksgiving, complete satisfaction. Therefore, "my" Mass shall become "my" perfect act of Religion only if I offer it with my Head with the purpose of procuring, above all else, "glory for God."

These, then—God's glory, restoration of His honor, remission of sins—are those of our desires which *shall certainly please* God and, ascending from the member to the Head, be heard.

However, God's Glory, Power, and Dominion can be assured Him only through the triumph of the "Mystical Christ," that is, Holy Church united to her Head. Therefore, with, in, and through Christ, as the second part of the "Our Father" teaches us, we must supplicate God for Christ's members—ourselves. Our daily spiritual and material bread, our love for God, our union with our Head and His other members—these, too, are objects of *desire pleasing to God and bound to be granted* by the Divine Majesty.

"Thus to pray," then, let us strive that our petitions, made in accordance with the spirit of Christ, may be carried to the throne of the Most Holy Trinity by our Head Himself in the course of "our" Mass.

[4] St. Matthew vi, 33.

May I formulate, in "my" Mass, requests for particular spiritual and temporal favors?

Besides these general intentions, each of Christ's members has, close to his heart, his own very particular intentions. Who is there that does not desire some spiritual favor for himself—for example, an end to scrupulosity, constancy in eradicating one or another bad habit, acquirement of certain virtues? Who is there that does not desire some spiritual favor for others—for example, a youth's better behavior, conversion of relatives or friends, peace in a household? More frequently, however, we must acknowledge, the faithful concern themselves with obtaining temporal favors, such as health, a good position, a rich marriage, success in an examination, material prosperity. . . .

May we formulate petitions of this kind at "our" Mass? May we offer Christ to God for ends like these, clear-cut in the mind's eye? Evidently we may, since it is always permissible to ask God for lawful boons. Moreover, reverence and respect are shown for God by the creature who, thus in his quest, recognizes His supreme wealth and infinite bounty.

Shall these petitions be heard without fail? Yes, if they can be numbered among those *pleasing to God.* Otherwise we shall obtain something else that is better for us, since God, Who knows how to remedy error in our asking by the wise distribution of His favors, treats no prayer with contempt.

How shall we make our pleas so presentable as to be acceptable to God? By offering them well-

manneredly, that is, truly disinterestedly; only with difficulty does self-seeking, egoistical prayer find the road to the heart.

Since "my" Mass's destiny is, *above all else*, to procure glory for God and triumph for the "Mystical Christ," I should be doing a great wrong were I to divert it from its proper end and transform it into a mere medium of expression of my petty desires. It is praiseworthy for me to offer "my" Mass for personal needs, but my concern for them should be entirely secondary. Attendance at Mass *solely* to gain health, find a husband, succeed in an examination, is very imperfect participation in infinite Homage, and, at the same time, shows marked lack of skill in the art of pleading—God evidently cannot be deeply impressed by the supplication of one who places his own trifling interests on a level with those of the Divine Majesty!

Scouting egoism, let the member of the "Mystical Body" learn how to forget self and to celebrate "his" Mass, although finally offered for a personal favor, *with Christ for the ends of Christ*—perfect praise, entire reparation, infinite thanksgiving, and obtainment of graces and favors that shall perfect and render more pleasing to God each member of the "Mystical Body," himself in particular. These ends should be the chief concern of the soul working in harmony with Christ the Head at the altar. When God is supplicated, as He should be, for His and Christ's great interests, He is infinitely satisfied by the Mass that has been offered Him, and showers this pleading member of His only Son with

His "paternal benevolence," showing special generosity in according what is asked. Henceforth this faithful soul shall have many chances to be heard as he desires to be heard, and even beyond his most ardent wish. Indeed, how could God refuse spiritual and temporal blessings, which His Omnipotence can so easily grant, to this member of Christ who, in union with his Head, has just procured an *infinite glorification* for the Almighty! In truth, Divine Bounty is eager to overwhelm with spiritual and temporal benefits those who, forgetting themselves for God, celebrate "their" Mass well.

The faithful who are thus detached from self in the Homage to the Most Holy Trinity have all the more reason for being heard by the Divine Majesty, since their *solicitude for God above all else* has the effect of *putting wisdom into their personal desires*, with the result that their supplications are in conformity with the will of Providence. When they feel urged to appeal insistently, it is because they are already supernaturally conscious that their request is not going to displease the Sovereign Wisdom. This principle may well be formulated: "The more a soul clings to God, the more enlightened is it as to the opportuneness of its demands." Herein lies the explanation of that great assurance possessed by the Blessed Virgin, in her plea to her Son at Cana, and by the saints, who seem to need only to ask to be granted extraordinary favors!

"Let us ask and we shall receive!" Worth trying, indeed! The attempt is always successful, but, to ensure easy success, a difficulty must be overcome

. . . *we must forget ourselves to the extent of being concerned only with God!* True, this state of mind and will can result only from efforts of persevering love; but many are the Christians who, if they would but courageously make the attempt, would succeed in offering "their" Mass, and in praying at it, with a devotion that would be entirely disinterested. Why should anyone imagine that, the moment he forgets himself, knowledge of his needs slips from the mind of God? "Men of little faith," [5] turning "their" Mass into an insistent argument to show God that their desires are weighty and that His glory depends upon them! . . . forgetting, even, after they have told God of their needs, for which it is quite lawful to pray, to bury themselves in faith, in the adoration that is due the Divine Majesty throughout the Immolation!

Holy Scripture teaches us how to obtain all our desires: "Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart." [6] Christ paraphrases this thought: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." [7] God's words are never deceiving; living up to the conditions they impose means the infallible obtainment of their promises! God can measure His thought for us by ours for Him! This is a law of the spiritual life whose daily application we can verify, if we will, by the perfect celebration of "our" Mass.

[5] St. Matthew xiv, 31.
[6] Psalm xxxvi, 4.
[7] St. Matthew vi, 33.

Personal fruit of the priest who celebrates "his" Mass

The priest's personal fruit is of the same nature as that of the Christians co-celebrating with him. Let us not forget that it is the "Mystical Christ" that makes the oblation; that is, Jesus Christ united to His members, particularly to those actually participating in the Sacrifice. It is meet that all those, priest and people, who actually present *their* Sacrifice to the Divine Majesty share in its effects. Celebrant and co-celebrants, therefore, enjoy all the fruits of *their* Mass just enumerated—*increase* of grace, progress in virtue, remission of sins, satisfaction of temporal punishment due for sin, obtainment of petitions—*but the priest receives of this spiritual fruit a much greater and choicer share than do the faithful.* This division of the fruits of the Mass that gives a larger share to the priest is absolutely just in consideration of his rôle in the offering of the Holy Mysteries.

While the priest and the faithful are co-celebrants, the priest alone is the *officiant*. He is commissioned by the "Mystical Body," on the one hand, to represent it; on the other, by Christ, to take His place. Thus the priest is an intermediary placed officially between Christ and His members and marked with a special character whence flow all his powers, the most important of which is that of "consecrating," that is, changing at the altar, when he will and by an act of his own free will, the bread into the Body of Christ, the wine into His Blood in the renewal

of Calvary's Immolation. It is within the Church's domain to command the priest to perform this sacred function according to the needs and desires of that particular part of the "Mystical Body" assigned to his care.

What a part in the Oblation has "this hand that divides the Sacred Flesh"![8] Since the priest's part in the Mass is more advantageous than that of the co-celebrants, since his function and responsibility are more important, his gain should be greater than that of the faithful. It is only reasonable that a position in the foreground should receive more abundant remuneration. When one considers the measureless personal fruit derived from "*their*" Mass by the ordinary faithful, what gratitude and wonder should fill priests' hearts at the thought of the immense increase for them of such wondrous treasure in "*their*" Mass!

Nevertheless, like the simple Christian, the priest profits only in proportion to his degree of sanctity and of union with the Head. Unhappily, priests, who are so highly privileged, can obstruct Divine Generosity! If the member receives supernatural life from the Head according to his importance in the "Mystical Body"—and whose part, except Christ's, is of greater importance than the priest's?—this life can come to him only while he is united to the Head. The priest who may be partially or wholly torn from Christ can share, then, in the untold fruits of "his" Mass only feebly or hardly at all,

[8] St. John Chrysostom, 60th Homily to the Antiochians.

while the faithful co-celebrating with him in perfect charity are inundated with divine grace!

However, the Mass of even a poorly-disposed priest would be, of itself, always good; for, since the Sacrifice's whole worth depends upon Christ *alone*, it would offer divine Homage to God and produce in the souls of the properly-disposed the same effects of grace and salvation. The co-celebrants, therefore, need not worry over the spiritual condition of the celebrant, so far as the validity of "their" Mass is concerned. Still, it is of more avail to participate in the Mass of a holy priest than in that of one who is lukewarm; for, in the former case, there is no dearth of that supplementary balance of favor which the personal intercession of the priest who is God's friend can attract.

Profit of those "for whom" the Mass is said

By an act of his free will the priest, in celebrating, not only renews the Sacrifice of Calvary but also, in virtue of his official power over the Oblation, indicates to the Divine Victim the *intention according to which* the Sacrifice is being renewed. Therefore, when we speak to Christ through the intermediary priest, our representative, we can prevail upon the Adorable Head to deign to offer His Oblation's infinite merits to the Most Holy Trinity for our explicitly stated intention.

The Liturgy, ever-faithful exponent of invisible realities, signalizes this power of directing Christ's intention which the priest possesses. Twice, at the

"Commemorations," the celebrant mentions the names of those privileged to have the Sacrifice offered for them. At the "Commemoration for the Living," he says, "Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants . . .," stopping a moment to name them. At the "Commemoration of the Departed," after the Consecration, he says, "Be mindful, also, O Lord, of Thy servants . . . who have gone before us with the sign of faith and who sleep the sleep of peace."

The special advantages elicited by the intention expressed by the Divine Victim immolating Himself flow directly upon these "servants" of God who have been named. Of this particular fruit of the Mass the priest cannot withdraw a particle either for himself or for others than those designated. Christ's Oblation, whole and entire, must be applied to those for whom the Mass is being said. However, the priest may freely recommend to God, without prejudice to the particular intention, those for whom justice, gratitude, charity urge him to pray, and these shall have the advantage of Christ's secondary intention, which is, naturally, priceless.

It must be strictly understood that celebrating the Mass according to a precisely stated intention is not unfair to the co-celebrants, whose profit, already discussed in this chapter, is derived from their co-operation in the Oblation and is entirely personal and inalienable; while the *special fruit*, now under discussion, that is the portion of those *for whom* Mass is being offered, comes to the designated from that intention Christ has of applying to them

His merits in whatsoever degree He shall judge fitting.

What a dispenser of bounty is Christ our Head! While we, celebrating *our* Mass with Him, are, as members of the Eternal Priest, deriving immeasurable personal profit, some beloved soul named by us as being in need of one or another grace—conversion, perhaps, or sanctification, or, if he be dead, deliverance from Purgatory—is about to feel the effects of infinite supplication made by Christ to the Divine Majesty!

The profit resulting from this all-powerful intercession for the designated soul is incalculable. . . . To give ourselves merely a faint idea of its worth let us remember who the Advocate is, in what terms He pleads (by "the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel"),[9] by what love He is actuated!

Let us rest in the assurance that, in the world, to obtain from the Most High the spiritual or temporal graces necessary for our salvation or that of others, there exists no means comparable in power to the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Profit of those who have the Mass Celebrated

Three causes affect the merit of a work of charity: the intrinsic worth of the work itself, the pain or labor its doing costs, the love with which it is done.

No work of mercy surpasses in worth the gift of

[9] Hebrews xii, 24.

a Mass! The giver of a glass of water shall be rewarded—how many more, how much greater the reasons for gaining a soul Christ's infinite offering! No merciful act can approach it in dignity; no gift, no wealth compare with it in value! If helping our needy neighbor through spiritual or material care draws down upon our generous hearts the blessing of Heaven, what graces shall be showered down upon us for having had offered Christ's very Immolation for a member of the "Mystical Body"!

Trouble or pain that the doing of a work of mercy costs is not lacking in the having Holy Mass offered; for, to have Masses celebrated, must one not offer a stipend to the priest? Many Christians have no difficulty in finding in their purses offerings for Masses, but how many humble members of the "Mystical Body" must and do economize, and even stint themselves courageously, to offer a small stipend for the celebrating of a Mass! Many a priest has been deeply moved and greatly edified when some of the humbler faithful have brought their modest offerings that they may have the Sacrifice of the Mass celebrated for their dead, or for their needy or erring living!

Finally, the love with which one does a work of mercy has its great effect upon the merit of that work. Does not the very idea of having Masses said indicate that one has the love of God deep down in one's heart? Even though this love be rather undeveloped, shall not the very Sacrifice that one's solicitude is causing to be offered increase one's love, remit one's sins, augment one's virtue?

No work of mercy is, then, superior to that of having Masses said for those we would help. From the sum set aside in our purses to aid our beloved ones, let us, therefore, reserve an "honorarium," a Mass-stipend . . . that the first prayer we address to God for them may be the great and only supplication of Christ renewing His Calvary.

Why the "stipend"?

There are people who profess to be scandalized at the Church's imposition of an obligation upon the faithful to give a stipend for the right to have Mass said for a particular intention, and these people even go so far as to say, "The Church sells the Mass!" One must protest against such a blasphemous assertion, and, furthermore, know how to answer it.

1. *The stipend is not a payment, but an offering.* Conception of the stipend as *value exchanged for something of corresponding or equal value* has never entered the mind of the Church or the thought of the faithful. It is evident that there is no comparison between the worth of a dollar or so and that of the Mass! However, the Church wishes her priests to live decently—what more logical recompense for the good they do can be made them than that made on the occasion of the chief service they render Christian people?

2. *The stipend entails a salutary privation,* the always painful sacrifice of a small sum of money. The Church wishes that some mortification attend

the having of Masses said, for, otherwise—so weak is human nature—the faithful would not have a vivid enough appreciation of the Holy Sacrifice's importance.

3. *The acceptance of the stipend is the acknowledgment by the priest that between him and the offerer there exists a contract* obliging the priest, under pain of grave sin, to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice for a determinate intention. The stipend *claims* the Mass—it is a constant reminder to the priest until his contract is fulfilled.

4. *The stipend is the only means whereby we are assured of the possibility of obtaining Masses.* If no stipend were exacted, how could one be sure of having a Mass said? If there were no cost or mortification entailed, everyone could claim a thousand Masses as easily as one. The priests would be overwhelmed with demands they could not answer, with petitions to which they could not do justice—there would be no evidence of obligation! Who would celebrate Mass for strangers, in these circumstances, when each would have always in mind his own relatives and friends?

Under prevailing conditions, the acceptance of the stipend is the external, solemn manifestation of obligation. In her adoption of the custom of accepting stipends for the celebration of the Mass the Church has shown her wisdom. Those who desire Masses obtain them, and they are sure that their Masses will be celebrated—thus all abuse is avoided, and each, priest and donor, is satisfied.

Let no one say that the stipend permits the rich

to have Masses said, but forces the poor to go without! The sum exacted is never so large as to be burdensome on the most modest of purses. It is true that the poor cannot have so many Masses said as the wealthy, but God is all-seeing—cannot His Wisdom compensate the impossibility of many Masses through the profit of the one only Sacrifice that meritorious privation on the part of the poor may have been able to have offered?

If the indigent desire to have Masses said, and have no stipend to offer, can we not believe that the merits of Christ are so abundant that God diverts a part of the Church's inexhaustible treasure to the benefit of the poor, abandoned members of the "Mystical Body," in exchange for their good will? In fact, are there not celebrated "objectless" Masses, those said for souls already in heaven, or even those offered without precise intention? The profit of these Masses falls into the Church's spiritual treasury, to be applied by God when He will to whom He will according to the always adorable designs of His Sovereign Justice.

Profit of those who take part in the celebration in any, even the most ordinary, capacity

The Offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is profitable, furthermore, to all those who, in any capacity, concur in effecting its celebration.

First of all, the server, so closely associated with the celebrant in the rites and ceremonies, evidently must receive compensation for careful, devout, and

intimate co-operation. How regrettable it is that the serving of Mass is so often accompanied by carelessness or even levity! Servers should be frequently reminded of the grandeur of their office, and often told of the fruits that they can derive from it.

Pious persons who have furnished breads, wine, candles; those who have embroidered vestments, made altar cloths—all participate, in a special way, in Christ's Immolation. What encouragement this knowledge should give workers and donors in their zealous activity for the beauty of God's house!

Church employees, such as sacristans and those who tidy up the sanctuary and decorate the altars, also have a right to the fruit of the Masses whose celebration they aid in effecting.

Let each one of these co-workers, whether his co-operation be remote or near, reflect on the graces he can receive every day, provided he knows how to direct his intention and to unite himself habitually to all the Masses which have his humble concurrence.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

PURGATORY'S GUERDON

Wherein it is to be seen that, somehow, I shall have "my" Mass in Purgatory . . . and that there this Mass shall ease me according to the measure in which I shall have appreciated "my" Mass here on earth.

"My" Mass, Purgatory's "dew"

My deriving of profit from the celebration of "my" Mass does not hinder in the least the souls in Purgatory from finding theirs therein. From Christ's Oblation they receive ease in their sufferings or, as the *Imitation of Christ* has it, "When the priest celebrateth, he obtaineth rest for the departed."[1]

This profit, this guerdon, which Purgatory gains from the celebration of "my" Mass, has a wholly consistent explanation. As are we, the souls in Purgatory are members of the "Mystical Body" of Christ. To Christ their Head they are united by ties that are henceforth indissoluble. As we have seen, Christ repeats and renews Calvary's infinite Homage for the purpose of putting His supreme Act of Religion within reach of every member of His "Mystical

[1] Bk. IV, Ch. V, No. 2.

Body" and of applying to them its profits. When we celebrate "our" Mass for the souls in Purgatory, and better still for a *certain* soul, why should not the dead have that share in the Redeemer's atonement accruing to them? That this is according to the mind of the Church we know from the Council of Trent's formal condemnation of "those who say . . . that the Sacrifice of the Mass does not profit the dead," when she adds "for this reason Mass is offered, according to Apostolic Tradition, not only for . . . all the needs of the living, *but also for the dead*, who, though they died in Christ, have not yet received purification enough." [2]

"My" Mass is, then, to use one of the Church's familiar expressions, "dew" thrown on the flames, since it hastens the suffering souls toward the "abode of refreshment" [3] or, again, toward "everlasting refreshment." [4]

The Liturgy reminds me that I must give the dead their share in "my" Mass

Charity demands that the part of the "Mystical Body" still having power over Christ's Oblation forget not that part of the same "Mystical Body" no longer able to celebrate. It is our duty not to deprive the suffering Church of its greatest good—the Sacrifice that applies Christ's merits.

That we may not be tempted to forget the

[2] Council of Trent, Sess. XXII, Can. 3 *seq.*
[3] Collect of Second Mass, All Souls' Day.
[4] Postcommunion for "those resting in the cemetery." —Requiem.

brethren who have gone before us, the Church takes the precaution of reminding us at each of "our" Masses that we must give the departed their due share. Here we shall not discuss the Liturgy of the "Mass for the Dead," which, it is evident, is replete with reminders of the souls in Purgatory and most eloquent invocations and pleas in favor of these same souls, but the rites prescribed by the Church for use *at every Mass* celebrated.

At the Offertory of the bread, the "*Suscipe, Sancte Pater,*" the priest says, "Receive, O holy Father, almighty and eternal God, this spotless host, which I . . . offer unto Thee . . . for . . . all faithful Christians, whether living or dead." Therefore it is the whole and entire Church, militant, suffering, triumphant, that shall participate in the offering; therefrom the triumphant Church shall draw glory and honor; the militant, saving graces; the suffering, cooling refreshment.

After the Consecration, the moment Christ the Head is present on the altar renewing Calvary's Homage, the celebrant pronounces this formulary: "Be mindful, also, O Lord, of Thy servants . . . who have gone before us with the sign of faith, and who sleep the sleep of peace." While saying these words, the priest joins his hands and falls into recollection, naming to himself, in a moment's deep silence, those men and women for whom he particularly wishes to pray . . . the one or more dead for whom he is offering the Holy Sacrifice, those of his family,

friends, benefactors that are deceased. Then he adds, in the "*Ipsis, Domine*":

"To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of refreshment, light, and peace. Through the same Christ Our Lord."

Coming as it does at the most solemn moment of the Mass, this appeal in favor of the departed shows what an immense share Christ, Whose Church always faithfully carries out His provisions, gives to the souls in Purgatory in the Sacrifice of the Altar. How could He forsake these poor members who love their Head with an ineffable love, since they have now learned to know Him better than they did while on earth, since they now clearly comprehend the nature of the living ties binding them to Him!

Thus, in the Mass, even in that which is not especially said for them, the dead are remembered by the Church and prayed for by Christ. Every Mass is, therefore, in some way profitable to them.

Shall I have "my" Mass in Purgatory?

Ought I to be satisfied with this general fruit of the Holy Mass when I shall be in Purgatory? Could I not have more? Shall I not have Masses which will be no longer for all generally, but just for me? Masses which will be as they were but yesterday on earth "mine"? Masses in which I shall co-operate with Christ, my Head? Masses in whose fruits I, myself, shall be special participator? It seems to me that if I could but celebrate "my" Mass in Purgatory, the very flames about me would be quenched!

This expectation of having "my" Mass in Purgatory seems impossible of realization, for the suffering souls no longer form part of the visible assemblage of the faithful, to which, furthermore, they could have no desire to be aggregated anew. Will the Church Suffering be, then, in a position somehow to participate personally in the Sacrifice of the Altar that the Church Militant *alone* offers under the "sensible signs" of bread and wine, or must it be resigned to deprivation of the profits that Christ's Oblation showers on those concurring in effecting it?

I shall have "my" Mass in Purgatory: 1, if I take care to have it said for my soul's repose

Evidently, the souls who have once entered Purgatory can no longer engage, as agents, in the offering of Christ's members who are still on earth. The individual soul in Purgatory, therefore, no longer is able to "celebrate," but if, before it left this earth, it wished that Masses be said after its decease and made disposition to this effect by instructing reliable persons to have the Sacrifice offered for its intention, then this soul, although now it is in the abode of expiation, actually concurs in the Oblation. Just yesterday had it saved, perhaps by rather painful, even harsh, privations, enough to procure sufficient stipends; just yesterday had it explicitly manifested its will to have the Infinite Homage offered to the Most Holy Trinity! Now, thanks to itself and by

its own command, the priest celebrates for it the redeeming and glorifying Sacrifice!

Too much encouragement cannot be given to the faithful's devout custom of making sure of Masses after death; for thus, to the best of their ability, do they prolong their active participation in the Sacrifice of the Altar and manifest, beyond earth's limits, their zeal for the celebration of "their" Mass. God cannot help being moved by the showing of such good will as this by souls who, while still on earth, concern themselves with perpetuating the Homage they give the Most Holy Trinity through Jesus Christ! God cannot help being touched by attachment to the Divine Sacrifice that is so deep and strong as to urge souls to ensure some sort of participation during that period when expiation's exigence shall deprive them of the power to assemble at the altar and sing praise to the Divine Majesty!

In the light of such thoughts as these, there is no difficulty in gauging the guilt of heirs who, through either avarice or neglect, disregard the testator's expressed desire by failing to give for Masses the funds saved and set aside for this holy purpose. These criminals, for such they are, deprive the suffering soul of its supreme consolation and most precious help. If such rapacious or negligent persons are absolved before death, assuredly it is only to face temporal punishment in Purgatory that shall be heavy to pay in full! It would be only fitting if their chastisement should consist, in God's justice, of being deprived in turn of the alleviation the Holy

Mass brings to the waiting and weary souls in Purgatory!

I shall have "my" Mass in Purgatory: 2, if others have the charity to have it said for me

The dead who, while living, have been improvident for themselves in not taking the precaution to have Masses said for them, can, nevertheless, still participate in celebrations which become "theirs," if charitable friends concern themselves with having the Holy Sacrifice offered for these poor departed souls. However, it is no longer as "offerer" but solely as *object or intention of the Mass* that such a soul profits from the Sacrifice with which it is associated. "Be mindful, O Lord," says the celebrant at the Commemoration for the Living, "of Thy servants . . . and of all here present . . . for whom we offer up to Thee . . . this sacrifice of praise."

It is not hard to understand why the Church so vehemently encourages the members of the living Christ here on earth to have Masses celebrated for the faithful departed. She regards the Offering of the Infinite Sacrifice as the most charitable act that can be performed for the dear ones that have gone and as the best way of showing gratitude that is their due. For this reason has she developed the beautiful rites and the matchless prayers of the "Mass for the Dead," wherein she invites us to pray, especially, for father, mother, relatives, friends, benefactors; for our priests, our bishops; for the faithful in their last resting-place in the cemetery.

She considers the "Office of the Dead," whose crowning point is the "Mass for the Dead," the best and most efficacious means of prayer for the departed, and she asks her children to associate as closely as can be, through the Sacrifice of the Altar, their dead to the infinite, redeeming Homage that Christ, Head of the whole "Mystical Body," renders the Most Holy Trinity.

What if I should have no Masses "of my own" in Purgatory?

If one of the faithful departed now suffering in Purgatory had not the foresight, while on earth, to provide that Masses be celebrated for him after death, and, furthermore, if no one on earth is thoughtful enough to have Masses said for him, what shall be his lot in the avenging flames? Shall he be forced to forego any hope of alleviation? It is not presumptuous to state that even this soul shall receive some profit from the Masses celebrated at our altars.

In the first place, as we have seen, in every Mass there is a commemoration for the dead that is equivalent to a forceful petition, so that, therefore, the suffering souls shall receive something gainful from every Mass said; but, outside this fruit that is common to all, they shall certainly acquire some special profit. For instance, are there not many Masses whose unused wealth is at the Church's disposal, Masses that have not attained the end of their special intention because either the souls they were

to relieve were no longer in Purgatory or, alas, had never been found there, since they had fallen "into the exterior darkness"? However, the merit of such Masses remains unimpaired, their power to atone and satisfy unweakened. That their power and merit should vanish without possibility of being used would be an incredible evil in view of the existence of the divine economy of charity, mercy, and justice! Should not the man of wealth who is assured of Masses on earth in great number or in perpetuity feel obliged to divert his overabundance of satisfaction and atonement to the poor? In the event that the rich man has not thus thought of directing his generosity toward the poor, cannot the Church be counted upon to make good his forgetfulness by destining that the superfluous satisfactions of the wealthy shall fall automatically into the lap of the indigent? The accumulated merits of the numerous earthly Oblations for the Dead who no longer have need of them are, then, the gain of the "forsaken."

Besides, are Purgatory's "forsaken" as many as one might think? To the aid of the poor abandoned souls in Purgatory tender-hearted Christians on earth always yearn to come—how often do priests receive stipends for this intention—"for forgotten souls"? Many Religious Orders have as a special end for the outlet of their zeal the easing of those souls, who, forgotten by their friends, have the greatest need of prayer. Furthermore, parish priests frequently enough offer Masses for the "dead of the parish," whose stipend is assured by regular collections for the purpose or by set levies on the parish's

ordinary income. Finally, the Church herself remembers to relieve those of its suffering members who may have been neglected by relatives or friends, or who may have been destitute of both means and relatives and friends; on All Souls' Day she has the Holy Sacrifice offered for them all! She shows her solicitude for the holy souls even to the extent of asking her priests to have the charity to repeat the Infinite Oblation for the repose of the dead three times on that day!

Thanks to the spirit of love animating the "Mystical Body" of Christ, no member can complain of the rest, for, in the Church, there is no dearth of mutual help, and, between the members on earth and those in Purgatory, the many ties are especially strong. Each day the faithful who celebrate "their" Mass are warned to remember the dead, and, even if they were not thus reminded by the Holy Liturgy to pray for the dead, their faith, as co-celebrants, and their love, evidenced by union with the Head of the "Mystical Body," would carry them quite naturally toward memory of the members of the Church Suffering.

"My" Mass in Purgatory is merely "delivering"

What shall be the exact profit I shall receive in Purgatory from the Masses which shall be "mine," whether said at my behest or through the thoughtfulness of those wishing to give me my share? A comparison can serve to make us understand that the

profit of such Masses is only "liberating," "delivering," or "freeing," and, also, subject to the good will of my Creditor, God Himself.

A soldier in active service wins his stripes and, at the same time, receives enough pay to satisfy his needs. Suppose that he becomes a General, deservingly, but that he has made the mistake of contracting debts. On leaving the army, he finds himself penniless and without resources. His creditors see that he is insolvent, and have him convicted and sent to prison for a number of years or until such time as he shall be able to pay to "the last farthing." [5] Evidently, he remains a General, for his acquired rank remains; but, to be at liberty, he must trust to his friends whose generosity alone can hasten his deliverance through repayment of his creditors.

So is it with the member of the "Mystical Body": in active service, that is, while on earth, he merits, advances, "wins his stripes," becomes a member most closely united to the Head, important in the "Mystical Body"; but he has unpaid debts, for which he is thrown into the prison of Purgatory by Divine Justice for a fixed time that can be shortened only by those willing to pay his debts for him. The *only* one who pays is Christ, Himself, whose merits are the "Mystical Body's" offering at Mass. This soul, who no longer can pile up gain for himself, is, then, thrown upon Christ's generosity.

For the member of the "Mystical Body" "in active service" who is co-celebrant with Christ the Head at

[5] St. Matthew v, 26.

the altar, "his" Mass is *meritorious;* his co-operation gives him the right to be "advanced" in intimacy with his Redeemer; he is overwhelmed with all the fruits just now mentioned in the preceding chapter, "My Spiritual Harvest." For the member of Christ "in retirement," "his" Mass can be merely "liberating." It can obtain for him no "preference," no "advancement," but only payment of arrears in the measure Christ shall will. Jesus the Priest has infinite merits to divide amongst us—while the member of the Church Militant may draw from them for his own spiritual enrichment, from his share the member of the Church Suffering can hope only to pay his debts.

Is each soul "freed" uniformly by "his" Mass in Purgatory?

In what measure does the Head of the "Mystical Body" pay the debts of those of His suffering members who take part in the Masses celebrated at our altars? It is evident that, if the Lord Jesus so willed, only one Mass would be enough to empty all Purgatory, but the Church, for good and grave theological reasons, has us repeat the Sacrifice of the Mass for the benefit of the dead as often as possible. The Divine Victim does not, then, distribute universally and all at one time to all souls the merits of His Immolation, but metes them out in greater or lesser abundance in accordance with His divine wisdom.

Although the order in which this "liberation" is

carried out must remain a mystery to us, nevertheless we can glimpse a few of its guiding principles, even scant knowledge of which shall serve, on the one hand, to enlighten our devotion to the Holy Souls, and, on the other, to suggest means whereby we assure ourselves, during this present life, of prompt deliverance from the purging flames, if through them we must pass.

When some souls arrive in Purgatory they come burning with love for God and happy in the thought that they were numbered, while on earth, among the co-workers most intimately united to the Head in the offering of Infinite Homage because they had been accustomed to take part in "their" Mass most actively and devoutly. It is unimaginable that such members shall not receive from the first of their "dead Masses"—in which they are probably, through their donation of the stipend itself, both "those who offer" and "those for whom the Sacrifice is offered"—gain that shall free them speedily if not at once from all their debts. How can Christ permit adorers, who have shown such ardor in procuring perfect glorification for the Most High, to wait a long time for the vision of the unveiled Blessed Trinity? Who shall dare to say that this "Incomparable Head," in His provident care for His members, may not apply, in anticipation, at Purgatory's very gateway, the satisfaction of their first "dead Mass," which may not be said until the morrow? Love brooks no delay, and the Lord of Love, Who has power over delays, will not hesitate (and this is no rash assertion) to annihilate them.

"My" Mass on earth is assurance against Purgatory

From what has just been said we must draw a conclusion that is of importance to us, a conclusion that may well be stated as a principle—Holy Mass will relieve us, dead in Purgatory, in accordance with the perfection with which we, living on earth, shall have celebrated "our" Mass. Therefore, if I shall have been a perfect adorer of the Most Holy Trinity with and by Christ, my Head, and if, through Him, I shall have procured infinite satisfaction for the Divine Majesty, shall I not gain infinite condescension from Him Who does not forget the gift of a glass of water?

"My" Mass on earth, then, through the complete Homage rendered by it to God, is assurance for me against Purgatory—by means of it I protect myself effectually against Purgatory's flames; through it the first thing each morning, in exchange for the Homage of praise and satisfaction it gives God, I obtain an increase of title to remission of debt and to eternal happiness; by it I fit myself to receive, if I shall fall into the purging fire, prompt easement and "cooling refreshment" from the Immolated Christ, who, in the hour of need, shall not forget to come to the aid of those who were but yesterday His co-workers at the holy altar.

However, all the members of the "Mystical Body" are not intimately united to their Head. Many have not co-operated with Him in giving God due glorification, but have lived their lives in almost entire

concern for anything and everything except associating themselves with Jesus Christ in His Sacrifice. Some of these members did not know the worth of that Sacrifice; others despised it. The first lent little more than physical presence to the Sunday Mass to which they went as those who fulfil a necessary but unpleasant obligation. Those of the second category had strayed from the Church's way nearly all their days; but at the last moment, through the grace of the Sacraments or through the intercession of the Blessed Mother, these tepid souls returned to God and passed through the gateway to salvation. Behold them now in Purgatory! Ought they not be allowed to stay there a while to learn from bitter personal experience that Christ's appeal for our co-operation in the Sacrifice of the Altar had meaning—that the celebration of "our" Mass is the most urgent of our duties? For a time these souls must stay and suffer—for them, entrance into Purgatory is the first stopping-place on the road to heaven; while for those who finish the long pilgrimage of a good Christian life, arrival in Purgatory is merely the last halt before eternal refreshment.

We can rest assured that God distributes as abundantly as possible to the souls in Purgatory "their" Mass's satisfaction

If God should wish to act in utter disregard of the ordinary laws which He, in His divine wisdom, has imposed upon Himself, it is evident that He could save any soul He pleased by the application

to it of only one Mass; but, save for times and on motives known only to Himself, God respects the regular order He has established. We must conclude, therefore, that the distribution of Christ's merits to His suffering members is subordinated to the ends of expiation for which Purgatory was created.

The determination of laws governing this expiation and of the effects of the fruit of "our" Mass upon it is God's affair; but, nevertheless, we can make with certainty two statements on the action of our Oblations in Purgatory: it is certain that

1. *God is as generous as possible to Christ's suffering members.* God has a special love for those souls who, saved by Christ's merits, are now bound to Him by ties of charity that nothing can sever, and He gives them all that His mercy can grant without overstepping the bounds of His justice and the exigencies of expiation. Therefore, we can say that each soul gains from each Mass the *maximum* obtainable.

2. *The soul that receives little has only itself to blame, and cannot attribute the long delay of its deliverance to God.* Each of Christ's suffering members gains from *his* "Masses of the Dead" only in the measure of his "carrying capacity." On earth, "his" Mass, of infinite worth in itself, procured him officially only finite gain measured according to his spiritual receiving and containing power. In Purgatory, where the Mass no longer acts "officially," the Sacrifice's profits are remitted to the Divine Bounty for distribution which, even

though made in supreme generosity, ought to conform, except in rare cases and for exceptional reasons, to each soul's degree of spiritual "receptivity."

In Purgatory's flames there are members of the "Mystical Body" so small, so pitiful, so undeveloped through want of exercise of virtue and, nevertheless, so burdened with debt! Their niggardly hands can hold and offer so little; yet they have so much to pay! Their throats are almost too straitened to swallow even a drop of Purgatory's refreshing "dew" when, for satisfaction, their need is a torrent! Even though hastened by many Masses their hour of deliverance is long-delayed! The Curé d'Ars, who seems to have had inspired thoughts on the state of souls after death, says of such a soul as this "He is saved, but just saved! Pray hard for him!" [6]

Again, other members of the "Mystical Body" are strong and vigorous, for they have "profited by the life" Christ infused into them, and now in Purgatory can stretch out wide-open hands when the Head distributes the "freeing" fruit of Masses. Who can doubt that Christ, desirous of having them in glory with Him, gives them freely as much of His merits as they can take? Furthermore, these important members of the "Mystical Body" are probably not too heavily laden with debt, since on earth they always saw to it that their balance did not become a deficit, and thus their reckoning is soon paid.

[6] *Vie du Curé d'Ars* par M. l'Abbé Trochu, p. 630, Lyon Vitte.

Such is the picture of the distribution of Christ's satisfaction in Purgatory that crops up in the pious Christian's imagination. In justice and wisdom God grants each soul all that He can from each Mass that is said for it. Since we cannot know the secret motives actuating Divine Providence in measuring out to the dead their share of profit from "their" Mass, since we cannot know in what abundance God metes Christ's merits to them—let us never weary of having the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered for them.

Which is of greater worth, "our" Mass on earth or "our" Mass after death?

The answer to this question is contained in the preceding pages. It seems clear that "our" Mass, celebrated *by us* and *for us* at the altar of Christ, is more precious than that which will be *our* Requiem, as the following deductions will show:

1. *On earth*, we *actually co-operate* in the Divine Sacrifice, offering Infinite Homage in union with Christ to the Most Holy Trinity. *In Purgatory*, this intimacy with the Victim of the Altar will no longer be ours, and the offering of "our" Masses, even those for which we shall have furnished the stipends, will have only our distant and extremely indirect concurrence.

2. *On earth*, our co-operation in "our" Mass is a cause of *measureless merit* and *superabundant sanctifying grace* for us. *In Purgatory*, "our" Mass for the Dead will fetch *no addition to our merit*, be-

cause, with the closing forever of our account of profits and losses, we shall no longer be in a position to *acquire* anything.

3. *On earth*, by "our" Mass we satisfy *beyond dispute* for the temporal punishment due our sins, provided we are properly disposed. Truly, since we need but use the merits of our Head, it can be said that "penance is sweet." *In Purgatory*, "our" Requiem will no longer apply directly to us the fruits of Christ's Passion, but will remit them straight into the hands of God, Who, as we have just read, will distribute them amongst us most liberally, taking into account, nevertheless, for justice' sake, the necessity of expiation.

4. *On earth*, by the donation of stipends for Masses that we are having said *we are actually mortifying ourselves* and, therefore, accomplishing a work of renunciation that cannot but be meritorious. *In Purgatory*, through the Masses that we have caused to be said after our death, we are depriving our heirs of money whose enjoyment we ourselves retained to the last second of earthly existence—it is our heirs who will be mortified. Those who are most eager to have Masses said during life generally show determination to remain of that disposition after death—by willing that their Masses for the Dead be many!

5. *On earth, we are sure* that the Masses we cause to be said *are said*. *In Purgatory*, it may be that we shall wait a long time before our heirs carry out the clauses of our last will and testament.

Do not all these deductions imply that it is more

advantageous and prudent for one to have "his" Masses celebrated for himself while living? Nevertheless, many of the pious faithful hesitate so to act; they prefer to give stipends for Masses for their beloved dead and, as for themselves, to rely, when they shall be in Purgatory, upon the fidelity of their heirs and the mercy of God. This is a praiseworthy attitude. Charity is so pleasing to God, our Heavenly Father, that these members of Christ will most assuredly lose nothing by their generosity provided they remain ever fervent in the daily celebration of "their" Mass and strong in the resolution to have the Holy Sacrifice offered for them after their death as often as possible.

PART THE THIRD

THE WAY TO CELEBRATE "MY" MASS WELL

The first chapter, "Preparation for Mass," demonstrates that, since the Mass is the culmination of Christian life, the worthy celebration of "my" Mass postulates my daily growth in perfection.

The second chapter, "Presence at Mass," teaches me how to unite myself profitably to the celebration of Mass by the priest at the altar.

The third chapter, "Communion during Mass," shows how Holy Communion, as an integral part of the Sacrifice, is the channel through which that infinite store of Christ's merits which is "my" Mass floods my soul.

CHAPTER THE FIRST

PREPARATION FOR MASS

Wherein it is to be seen that "my" Mass, the greatest act within my power of performance, must have my whole life as preparation . . . and that "my" participation in this Sacrifice depends upon the care I shall have taken to make myself worthy to "celebrate."

"My" Mass's celebration must have proper preparation

Just as the priest who might ascend the altar without making the required preparation would not be a quite worthy celebrant, so the member of the "Mystical Body" who is not properly prepared to offer and to be offered with the "Adorable Head" is not well qualified to participate in the Holy Sacrifice. Priest, people, and Christ, as we have seen, make *one only "Mystical Christ,"* Who is Sacrificer and Victim. Whether he be great or small, the member can be a co-worker in this supernatural organism of wonderful grandeur that is the complete and perfect "Son of God," only if he be in full union with the *Head.*

"My" Mass, then, exacts that I put myself into intimate union with Christ by means of careful and

persevering preparation. If I wish to "co-celebrate" with Him, I must, as a member, "hold to" Him as closely as I can.

Furthermore, did not my divine Head, the Chief of Mankind, give me the example of preparation for the Sacrifice? During all His years of life on this earth did Jesus Christ do anything except prepare Himself for Golgotha? "Behold, I come to do thy will, O God."[1] This will was the decree of immolation! During His earthly pilgrimage, Christ prayed, fasted, adored His Father—all in preparation for the "High Mass" that was to end His mortal life.

However, since He was not to celebrate that "High Mass" alone, Christ's preparation was also that of those who were to be "co-celebrants," that is, the members of His "Mystical Body"; therefore do we find the entire New Testament revealing Christ to us organizing His Church in its varying ranks of people and shepherds, fitting it for the great Oblation, and qualifying it for what was to follow the Oblation—that glorification which He had permitted Peter, James, and John to glimpse on Tabor.

The one and only Sacrifice of Calvary that is renewed upon our altars is, therefore, for us, the actual members of the "Mystical Body" on earth, the crowning point of existence, the supreme act of Christian life for which our Head and Chief decrees that we shall make a most painstaking preparation. Participating in Christ, our Head, and living in Him and with Him for the glory of the Most Holy Trinity, we

[1] Hebrews x, 9.

cannot approach the holy altar worthily unless we adapt and conform our heart and soul to the priestly functions that we are to share with the Supreme Priest.

Therefore, that "my" Mass may be a worthy and gainful participation in the Infinite Oblation, I must give myself the benefit of a careful and lengthy preparation. My Head, Jesus Christ Himself, expects me to show myself a member capable of action. Christ must feel that, when His "Mystical Body" is performing His Sovereign Act of Oblation with Him, its activity and action are vigorous and healthy.

The necessary preparation for "my" Mass

That I may celebrate "my" Mass well, I must fit myself for it, in the first place, by self-instruction in the altar's mysteries, that is, I must learn the meaning of such terms as "sacrifice," "priesthood," "eucharist." The preparation for "my" Mass will be, then, *doctrinal* first.

Since Catholic doctrine is visibly handed down to us through the Liturgy, we may say that our sacred ceremonies form the best illustration of our beliefs. The preparation for "my" Mass will be, then, secondly, *liturgical.*

However, that I may take an efficacious part in the drama of the altar as one of the faithful, I must be a member in absolute union with my Divine Head by means of grace. Furthermore, my union with

Him must be welded more closely day by day through making my will like unto His by the practice of all virtues. In the third place, then, the preparation for "my" Mass will be *ascetical.*

Working all my life and with all my heart on this triple preparation, daily I shall become less unworthy to offer with my Head the Homage of all glory to the Most Holy Trinity.

1. The doctrinal preparation for "my" Mass

"Only the known begets desire!" To appreciate "his" Mass, therefore, the faithful member must first learn its worth. Too evident it is that most Christians know little of the truths that have to do with the "mysteries of the altar." Even of the Sacrifice "which is theirs," as the "*Orate, fratres*" of the Mass shows us, many Catholics have only a few vague notions that have stayed in their minds from the days of their catechetical instruction for First Communion! For this reason it is not hard to understand the indifference of some of the faithful in regard to the obligation of attending Mass on Sundays and holy-days, their attitude of reproach toward the Church that "forces" their attendance, and the easy willingness with which they dispense themselves, without much remorse of conscience, from fulfilling this Precept of the Church.

Therefore, it is necessary to know *what the Mass is.* Of all our necessary studies that of the Mass is the most important and fruitful, for, since the Mass

is the "meeting-place" of all the Mysteries of the Faith—Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption, Grace, Salvation—study of the Mass means study of these mysteries.

The first means by which we shall acquire doctrinal preparation for "our" Mass is reading

The member of Christ that truly desires knowledge of "his" Mass first seeks books of instruction on the Mass. Priests and the better educated and more cultured of the laity can find an inexhaustible wealth of information on the doctrine of the "Mystical Christ" and the "Sacrifice of the 'Mystical Christ' " in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, notably in those of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Augustine, who preached eloquently and at every opportunity our incorporation in Christ (in accordance with the revelation of both Old and New Testaments) for the twofold work of God's glorification and our own redemption.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, whose mind fed almost wholly on the thoughts of the Fathers of the Church, binds in one glorious sheaf the ideas culled from the doctors who lived before him and produces the most magnificent general instruction conceivable on "Christian life through adherence and adhesion to Christ's Mystical Body." Once it was thought that Saint Thomas was beyond the grasp of the piety of the ordinary faithful, but the enormous and

unprecedented success among the people of recent translations of his works would prove the contrary.

Of the French authors who have written best on our mystic union with Christ and on our co-operation with Him in His "Mysteries," Saint John Eudes must be cited, especially for his monumental work, "*La vie et le Royaume de Jésus dans les âmes chrétiennes.*" [2]

The seventeenth-century French School of Mysticism remained faithful to the Church's doctrinal traditions. Bérulle, Ollier, Condren, Thomassin, and their like knew how to draw the compelling conclusions having to do with our participation in the God-Man's Priesthood from the truths revealed by Our Lord and developed by Saint Paul.

To what causes must we attribute the eclipse-like treatment accorded, during the last century, the doctrine of the Christian's incorporation into the "Mystical Body," and, at the same time, the apparent disdain manifested for this great truth and its corollaries? First, to Jansenism; secondly, to the materialism of the eighteenth century; and, finally, to the disorder born of the turmoil of the French Revolution. It is a sad but true statement that Christian piety has not sought, in this last hundred years as much as in other ages, its nourishment from the thought of its union with its "Incomparable Head," from the thought of that union of Head and members that makes the "Mystical Christ."

[2] See *The Reign of Jesus*, an abridgment in English translated by K. M. Harding.

Even today the great mass of the faithful has only a faint conception of this consoling doctrine, with the result that few are the Christians who seek in it nourishment for their spiritual life. Recent years, however, have witnessed a reaction to this apathy, a reaction which, thank God, promises widespread, perhaps universal, growth. The credit for this reaction, giving, at the same time, due recognition to all other religious and secular writers, belongs mainly to those Benedictines of several abbeys [3] who have recently published works that have been a powerful incentive in recalling souls to the discernment of truths from which their attention should never have been distracted. It must be noted—witness the triumph of the inspired wisdom of that Church, which never neglects any detail in the worship it renders God!—that it is by way of the Liturgy that the Mystic, after a period of forgetfulness, has been brought back to the true conception of his rôle as member of the "Mystical Body." Masterly papers on Saint Paul have been published; illustrious professors have been holding school; and theologians, clustering around safe doctors, have been studying the doctrine of the "Mystical Body." It can be said that today this doctrine once more holds its place of honor with those pious Catholics who are well instructed, but how shall this sweet and nourishing "marrow" of Christian teaching be brought down to the level of the minds of the millions and millions of earnest yet ignorant followers of Christ?

[3] Notably Solesmes and Maredsous.—TRANSLATOR.

The second means by which we shall acquire doctrinal preparation for "our" Mass is preaching

The spreaders of notions of theology among the mass of the faithful are the preachers of the Word. As Saint Paul said to the Romans,[4] "Faith therefore cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God." According to the Apostle's advice, then, pastors of souls and all priests whose duty it is to teach Christian Doctrine must speak to their congregations in the language used by the Fathers of the Church. In olden times, the people gathered around the pulpits of these Fathers, heard their teaching, accepted and followed it! Profound convictions on the truth, "Christian life is adherence and adhesion to the 'Mystical Body'" penetrated their souls. In those days, the people knew that they were "members of Christ," centered their whole religious life in this doctrine of "co-operation with the Head," and made of their participation in the Sacrifice of the Eternal Priest the mainspring of their sanctification.

Would that catechetical, homiletic, and rhetorical teaching of these days would revert to this fundamental theme! If only the faithful knew the marvels of their incorporation in the "Mystical Christ," how greatly would their piety be increased! If only they knew, in scriptural and patristic terminology, that, by Baptism, they have been "ingrafted in" and attached to the Head; that, by the baptismal character,

[4] x, 17.

they have been admitted into true participation in Christ's Priesthood; that, henceforth, as priests of God they are "like to Sons of God," [5] that the characters of Confirmation and Holy Orders are only finishing touches added to that of Baptism, producing, however, a more intimate incorporation in the Supreme Priest, Christ; that, once they are members of Christ, His Sacrifice, His Death, His Resurrection, His Ascension, His Reign, His Grace, His Merits, are their boons, their possessions, *theirs;* that, by the very fact of their incorporation in Christ the Priest they become a "chosen generation, a kingly priesthood," [6] qualified to offer God authentic, official, public worship through "their" Mass; that, in short, as Saint Augustine says,[7] "if Christ's Body has been anointed with priestly unction, so has His Mystical Body, which is ourselves"—if our people of today only knew this truth in these words, what an incentive would their fidelity and piety have!

If only our preachers would use this truth as their theme, those who would hear would marvel at the beauty of the doctrine and learn to detest sin and sinfulness. Their detestation would be effective, for the simple reason that this doctrine and its corollaries can show to the full the real horror of sin—that venial sin, so easily committed, hurts, even paralyzes the member; that mortal sin kills him by transforming him into an inactive, non-functioning organ that, nevertheless, remains attached to the body so long as faith remains; and that "in-

[5] *Summa*, p. iii, q. 63, a. 3.
[6] I St. Peter ii, 9.
[7] *In Psal.* xxi.

graftment" can be renewed and become intact only through repentance and absolution.

What wondrous concepts! What an inexhaustible source of nourishment for piety that has become concrete and easy because its task is set! The "member of Christ" who knows that he is a "member of Christ" has merely, day by day, to become more a "member of Christ," more closely united to Christ the Head, more robust through his union with Christ the Head, better nourished because of his adherence to Christ the Head! How often, through this very certainty of belonging to Christ's "Mystical Body," does the Christian feel drawn to God! Jesus Christ is no longer a distant and solemn Personage Whom the fearful adorer sees veiled under the Eucharistic Species; no longer, as so many like to picture Him, a "prisoner" enchained by us in the dungeon-tabernacle! No! He is now closer to us than a friend, than a brother! He is the "Incomparable Head" of which we are the members, the glorious "Head" whose arms, hands, organs are we, living on the same sap, permeated with the same spirit, which is the Holy Ghost.

How sublime are the functions of this "Mystical Body" "which is ourselves"! How easy for preachers to promote real and actual worship of God by teaching the faithful that, since Christ the Head can no longer separate Himself from His members any more than we can separate ourselves from our limbs, He offers *with us* His Sacrifice of the Altar, which becomes "our" Mass! (This book of ours can hardly do more than tap the source of the rich

beauty of this doctrine!) Then the preacher can dwell upon what will come after "our" Mass which is our immolation with Christ—"our" Resurrection with Him, "our" Ascension, "our" Reign at the right hand of the Father—since the members of every organism must, necessarily, share always and everywhere the lot of the Head. It may well be asked why such truths as these should be allowed to lie dormant, instead of being preached "in season, out of season." [8]

As an excuse for silence, there might be advanced the difficulty of making such doctrine understandable to the ordinary faithful. Few hearers can grasp truths of this kind at first hearing, and in fact many Christians—since, in recent times, so seldom have these beautiful and enthusing thoughts been expressed by preachers—manifest astonishment when they hear for the first time such doctrine coming from the pulpit. They are unaccustomed to it, and are inclined to show distrust of it as a novelty that need not be given much consideration until expressly and anew directed to do so. The seed, which was good, has, unhappily, fallen upon poor ground!

However, if from the first word of the Catechism, which usually begins by defining the Christian as a "*member* of Christ," to the last, which is often "life eternal," that is, the Reign of the Head shared by the member, the trouble has been taken to teach children their relation to *their* Head, Jesus Christ; if pains have been taken to accustom them to the conception of their life as Christians in adherence

[8] II Timothy iv, 2.

and adhesion to Christ and, consequently, of the necessity of keeping themselves in perpetual union with Him—always envisioning Christian Doctrine for these children from the same true point of view, namely, that of our incorporation by Baptism in Christ, Whose priestly functions we share, even to celebrating with Him, through His priests' intermediating ministry, "our" Mass—then will our faithful people very soon come to know what a glorious supernatural life is theirs, will speedily feel an increase of love for their Divine Priest, and will not be long delayed in having, in preparation for their Oblation, a piety hitherto unknown to them!

2. The liturgical preparation for "my" Mass

Man is so made that he can understand practically and well only what he sees. One of the marks of the Church's divine institution is the facility with which she hands down hidden truths in quite visible fashion; through her Liturgy she reveals the loftiest and subtlest doctrines which, of themselves, would have been altogether likely to evade the dominion of our senses.

Therefore, that we may know and love the "mysteries of the altar," we must supplement our study of doctrine with that of Liturgy. The history and signification of the ceremonies of the Mass will serve to settle our theological notions precisely. However, one does not become acquainted with the rites of the Church in a day! Knowledge and appreciation of them can come only from long prac-

tice. "My" Mass's liturgical preparation must be so persevering as gradually to lead me to know in every detail the meaning of every priestly gesture, as well as its origin, which often determines its signification, and must be so satisfyingly searching as to enable me to comprehend the significance of the words pronounced by the celebrant—words dripping with unction, sweetness, and truth!

That the liturgical study of "my" Mass be fruitful, I need safe guides. Within the last few years there have been published many books finely adapted to the needs of popular piety and capable of throwing light on the ceremonies of the altar that are so frequently not understood by the faithful.[9] Deserving of mention, also, are those liturgical reviews whose purpose it is to disseminate ideas that are indispensable to Christians whose desire it is to interest themselves in the service of the altar.[10] The member of Christ who is eager to celebrate "his" Mass well with Christ can benefit himself immensely by reading such books and magazines as these which broaden so effectually the spiritual horizon of his participation in the Sacrifice.

For those of the faithful who read little, are rather uneducated, or have no leisure to study liturgical principles for themselves and by themselves, preaching and lecturing must supply for the lack of personal self-instruction. Wherever feasible, it would be a good plan to institute lessons on the Liturgy in regular class or lecture form in parish schools, in

[9] See Reference List at end of book.
[10] See Reference List.

sodalities, leagues, confraternities, and in study circles. Such institution would be a most practical and powerful means of teaching the faithful how to "celebrate their" Mass worthily and of creating within them a supernatural attraction for the "mysteries of the altar."

The ascetical preparation for "my" Mass

Of all the preparations for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice the most important is that of the heart and will. To celebrate "his" Mass well, the member must be united to the Head as closely and firmly as possible by ties of virtue and love. The degree of co-operation one brings to the Supreme Priest in the offering of infinite Homage is measured by his importance in the "Mystical Christ's" Body. Hence, one readily concludes that a lifetime is not too much to devote to the work of developing oneself as Christ's member and to that of assuring oneself, in the supernatural organism which is the "finished and complete Christ," a higher degree of vitality and activity in regard to that supreme act of Religion which is Oblation to the Most Holy Trinity.

Therefore, for the Christian who understands what "his" Mass is, preparation for the Sacrifice becomes the one end of existence. Such a Christian knows that he was created solely to serve, praise, and adore God; that adoration, praise, and service are rendered God only through the "Mystical Christ"; and that the place where the "Mystical

Christ's" Homage is offered in its fulness is the altar. Therefore this Christian comprehends that he must bend his every effort in this "Mystical Body" toward co-operating in the acts of Religion it performs with its Head, especially that of "its" Mass.

How far does this true conception of "life in Christ" transport us from the narrow and "supernaturally egoistical" tendencies of certain kinds of spirituality, in which virtue is sought for itself alone or for the advantages it gains one in this world or in the next, without thought, above all and before all, of God's due glorification and adoration! Christ's member must rise above self-interest! His ideal of Christian perfection must be and is this—to be more intimately incorporated in the "Mystical Christ" that he may "work harder" in the Divine Majesty's service in the Oblation at the Altar. Besides, he knows that in his eager search for the Kingdom of God through his union with the Head and Chief all other boons, spiritual and temporal, will come to him in unlooked-for profusion.

Therefore, for the Christian soul, virtue is not merely a luxury, an ornament, a something of which it can be proud; it is a boon of prime necessity without which there can be no union with the "Mystical Christ," hence, no Homage to God, hence, no Mass!

Let us, therefore, prepare for "our" Mass, each day better, each day more and more! Lifetime effort is not too long, not too much. Let us not worry about being too well prepared, for we shall

die before we shall have succeeded in celebrating "our" Mass as perfectly as we may have desired and dreamed!

The ascetical preparation for "my" Mass consists of forming within myself the Victim of the Sacrifice

In the ascetical preparation for "his" Mass, the Christian must remember that, as co-sacrificer, he will be the more united with Christ the Head, the more he forces himself to become victim with Christ.

The closer our union as "victims" with Christ the Victim, the better shall we celebrate "our" Mass; the more willing and eager we are to be "co-oblates," the greater and better "co-offerers" of infinite Homage shall we be. That was what Saint Paul meant when he wrote the Romans,[11] "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service."

Our spiritual preparation for "our" Mass will consist, then, of "sacrificing" ourselves with Christ; that is, of desiring and accepting the ordinary crosses of Christian life that will merit for us the title of "*sacrificed*" in that measure in which they will make us co-victims with Christ in His Holy *Sacrifice.*

What, then, are these crosses that will make of us "victim-members" with the Head, and transform

[11] Romans xii, 1.

us into the "living sacrifice, holy, pleasing, unto God" demanded by Saint Paul?

Formation within ourselves of the Sacrifice's co-victim: 1, by acceptance of necessary hardships in remaining in sanctifying grace

The first concern of the Christian who wishes to celebrate "his" Mass is to *remain a member of Christ,* that is, to remain united to the Divine Head by ties of love. It is not always easy, however, to maintain these ties; for, if there be the slightest wavering in vigilance or the least relaxation from care, they slacken so easily! The sum total of efforts made by Christians who would remain in steadfast union with Christ their Head by the preservation of sanctifying grace constitutes in them the first and indispensable "stage of victim" for those who would become co-celebrants at Christ's Mass.

Let no one say that this first stage of "victimhood" is not meritorious in a large way! Is there anyone who does not know how hard it is for poor fallen human nature to remain in the state of grace? The very general obligations of Christians are in themselves causes of repeated privations: to pray regularly, to prefer Sunday Mass to a pleasure-trip, to kneel before the priest in the confessional, to fast and abstain on the days appointed, to show oneself publicly as a practicing Catholic in a community of unbelievers—all these are only so many occasions for "sacrifices" that prepare for *the* Sacrifice.

Outside these ordinary precepts that govern the life of a Christian and are common to all Christians, how many different mortifications does the observance of the duties of the various states of life impose upon the faithful! Married people know what courage and what confidence in Divine Providence they must have that they may never offend God in their conjugal duties. Young men and women who would cling to purity must fly lewd shows, cheap novels, and bad companions, must oppose to persevering and vicious temptations unyielding and high-hearted resistance! When a youth has passed the dangerous years of transition from boyhood to manhood without having been "cut off" from Christ by mortal sin, has not this dear young member of the "Mystical Body" already made serious enough preparation for his "state of co-victim" to permit him to offer with the adorable Priest at the altar?

A young girl of today who remains a modest and retiring "Christian virgin" of the long ago is the marvel of her acquaintances and friends. She is decent in dress, reserved in manner, chaste in appearance; she shuns parties where she could be the center of attraction, she makes no extravagant show of her youth and beauty, but, on the contrary, retains her piety and spiritual wisdom, stays busily at home ready to do housework that is often repulsive; she is charitable, devoted to the sick and poor. What does "society" think of her? She receives admiration and blame—for what? For "sacrificing" her best years! Nevertheless, she has been merely one of the "prudent virgins." This simple will to

remain faithfully attached to Christ the Head in the doing of ordinary tasks is the cause of "sacrifices" that astonish the world!

Can we not say, then, that simple, loyal, generous acceptance of Christian life as such is in itself a preparation for "our" Mass? Every member of Christ presenting himself at the altar of "his" Mass in the state of grace has without doubt endured pain and suffered privation; in a word, he is in some degree already "a living victim, holy, pleasing to God," capable of offering with Christ the Head and, therefore, of being offered with Him.

Formation within ourselves of the Sacrifice's co-victim: 2, by acceptance of crosses from Divine Providence

When Christ wishes to give members a greater importance in the Oblation, He sends supplementary sufferings to perfect them as co-victims. Our Lord Himself has warned us that He is altogether disposed to associate us, by means of pain and sorrow, with Himself in a more intimate way in His Sacrifice. For that reason does He invite us to accept voluntarily the trials He sends: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." [12]

Christian tradition has seized upon the Master's thought, designating under the name of "crosses" the tribulations of life from the moment of their

[12] St. Luke ix, 23.

acceptance by Christ's members as coming from the hand of God. Just as the pains and hardships we suffer merit the name of "sacrifice" only in that measure in which they help to make us co-victims in the *one and only Sacrifice*, so trials are worthy of being called "crosses" only when we accept them with the purpose of uniting ourselves through them more intimately with Jesus Christ in Golgotha's renewal—"our" Mass.

The member of the "Mystical Body" who desires to celebrate "his" Mass daily, understands what a powerful means of preparing himself for his co-operation with Christ he possesses in the daily voluntary and cheerful acceptance of grief, sickness, reverses, separations, and other trials. Christ's member would be making a great mistake in showing aversion to any visitation sent by God, no matter how terrible it might be, and he would be making a greater mistake if he murmured against the visitation, for God-sent trials transform him, that he may offer with Christ, into the nearest possible resemblance to the Victim-Priest. Furthermore, they obtain for him the most treasured of boons; for, mingled with Christ's merits, our poor little sufferings take on an incalculable value, as does the drop of water which, put into the chalice before the Offertory, is absorbed into the wine and, with it, becomes the Blood of Christ.

Thus will "our" Mass, prepared for by Christian suffering, be true co-operation with Christ offering Himself to His Father.

Formation within ourselves of the Sacrifice's co-victim: 3, by self-imposed mortification

There are holy souls who find that the Divine Head does not form them quickly enough in His image.

They eagerly desire to become greater victims in the Holy Sacrifice, and, increasingly, day after day, seek crosses from Divine Providence, looking forward willingly and ardently to the visitation of trials and sufferings. In the biographies of Saints one often reads frightful details—frequently more admirable than imitable—of self-inflicted penances. The Curé d'Ars, for example, for years heard confessions from twelve to eighteen hours a day, sleeping at most two hours a night, eating at mid-day a mouthful or so without sitting at table, flogging himself until he drew blood, wearing iron chains that cut his flesh . . .[13]

The good Curé was in truth a victim! And what a co-operator with Christ in "his" Mass! The prevalent opinion at Ars, founded on fact, was that, in some mysterious fashion, he perceived Christ present under the Host. His attitude at Mass was eloquent of triumph, and the very sight of John Baptist Vianney celebrating the "holy mysteries" was enough to convert sinners and to inflame pious souls with greater love of God.

If at "their" Mass Saints, as members, bring ex-

[13] *Vie du Curé d'Ars,* Abbé Trochu, Lyon Vitte; English translation, *The Curé of Ars,* by Dom Ernest Graf, O.S.B.

ceptional co-operation to Christ their Head, it is because their preparation for the victim-state is exceptionally advanced; but can we, poor weak members of Christ's Body, yet still so eager to celebrate "our" Mass perfectly, follow these Saints in their extraordinary, even harrowing, ways of penance?

Let the Curé d'Ars himself answer that question with his usual shrewdness and correct judgment. Once, at the beginning of Lent, his faithful Catherine Lassagne asked permission to fast. M. Vianney refused permission. "But you do plenty of it, yourself," she retorted. "True enough," the holy priest answered, "but I can do better work when I fast, while you could do no work at all"[14]

God, in His goodness, therefore, exacts from us as voluntary penances in preparation for "our" Mass, only those labors, pains, trials, sufferings, which do not "prevent us from doing our work," that is, that allow us to do, as best we can, the duties of our state of life. Only misinformed zeal would urge pious souls to neglect their health, for example, or anything necessary to family life, that they may abandon themselves without restraint and in excess to the practice of mortifications. Common-sense is nowhere so much a factor as it is in regard to these "supplementary sufferings." One cannot insist too strongly to Christ's members who wish to avoid the perils of rashness and, often, of pride, that they undertake no supplementary mortification without the permission of an enlightened director.

Nevertheless, what a field of voluntary privations

[14] *Vie du Curé d'Ars*, p. 368.

is open to all souls desirous of becoming "living victims, holy, pleasing unto God," without prejudice to either health or obligations of state in life, without yielding to imprudence, without need of their confessor's permission! When these members of Christ shall have "sacrificed" useless words, frivolous conversations, distracted and distracting gazing around in church, luxury in eating, indecency of dress; when they shall have poured from their abundance into the almsbox or into the lap of the poor; when they shall have exercised the apostolate, in accordance with their circumstances and fitness, by teaching Catechism to little children, superintendence over societies, propaganda for the Catholic Press, . . . then shall they have endured a host of "supplementary sufferings" of their own free will and, without having left beaten paths, shall they have become the "Victim." Christians of this type will be able to celebrate "their" Mass worthily each morning, since every moment of their existence will have been spent in careful and persevering preparation for it.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

PRESENCE AT MASS

Wherein it is to be seen that our presence at Mass should be "official," that is, having the character of a "celebration" . . . that, consequently, we must participate actively in the Oblation by following the Liturgy closely. . . . and that this close following of the Liturgy attains its best results at Solemn Mass.

Our presence at Mass should have the character of a "celebration"

This book's purpose has been to show that the Sacrifice of the Altar is "our" Mass, since the *offerer* and the *offered* are one and the same "Mystical Christ," Head and Body, Whose living and active members we are.

Knowledge of this great truth should have its effect upon our attendance at Mass. The Church does not demand of us attendance at the "mysteries of the altar" that is merely physical, passive, and indifferent, but presence that shall constitute a real co-operation with Christ immolating Himself, in other words, a *celebration.*

All the faithful who gather in the church's nave, near the priest at the altar, form "one only heart,

one only soul." Christ, Head of the entire Church, Who is sacrificed at each Mass at the head of His "Mystical Body" in its completeness comes down upon the very altar before which we kneel to be especially offered with and for those of His members who *at the actual moment* are grouped together near Him. With these actually present members He renders infinite Homage, and offers perfect praise, superabundant thanksgiving, and infinite satisfaction to the Most Holy Trinity; in union with them He pleads that God's "Kingdom may come" and begs for the spiritual and temporal graces necessary to His members. This particular Mass is the *common work* of all those comprising that part of the "Mystical Body" at that moment in church, and is the result of the united efforts of *these* members in union with their Head.

In the light of such knowledge as this, it should not be hard to realize how false and illogical is the attitude of those of the faithful who attend Mass listlessly and without devotion, and particularly of those who openly profess to assist at only Requiem and Nuptial Masses, and then only because constrained to do so by ordinary decency! People of this sort arrive at church as late as possible and leave as early as they can, using the short period of time spent in the sacred edifice to gaze at their neighbors, dream of business affairs, and show signs of impatience! Not a syllable of prayer do they utter! Such presence at Mass does not count for much, and assuredly is in no sense of the word *co-operation* with Christ the Head.

Fortunately, this is the attitude of only the smallest minority of Catholics. Those who would never miss Mass easily are, happily, in the majority. They are people of better disposition and stronger conviction. It may be that most of them go to church to *fulfil an obligation;* such an intention is correct and, furthermore, already shows a sort of subconscious will to co-operate with Christ. In church, such well-disposed Christians say some prayers, we can easily believe, and therefore can be said to have adhered closely enough to the "Mystical Body" to have shared in the Oblation after a fashion, at least. Whatever will have been their share in the Oblation, the Church considers that their kind of attendance satisfies her precept.

However, what progress could be made by these less-enlightened Catholics if they had merely some elementary notions on proper presence at Holy Mass! Then they would no longer be seen, during the celebration of Mass, indifferently reciting one prayer or another, idly fingering the rosary, or saying litanies, when the drama of Calvary that is being unfolded before their eyes should be holding their enraptured and exclusive attention! Christians who pray solely by word of mouth or "by heart," whatever be their object in praying, evidently unite themselves by some sort of intention to the "mysteries of the altar" and take part in the Oblation; but how much greater would their participation be, how much more fruitful their activity, how much deeper their piety, if only they would keep themselves in the very spirit of Christ immolating Himself by

following closely His every action and emphasizing each successive phase of the Oblation by voluntary and repeated expressions of adherence!

The best way to "celebrate" is to follow the Liturgy closely

What, then, is the best method of celebrating "his" Mass for use of the Christian? Evidently, the following of the Liturgy step by step!

The Mass's venerable liturgical form is *imposed* upon the priest offering the Holy Sacrifice. Than this authentic and official means of celebration the Church tolerates no other. These scrupulously and rigidly set rites hand down hidden mysteries, express sentiments appropriate to realities, and show in all correctness the union of Head and members in the Oblation. Are these motives not strong enough to induce the faithful who wish to celebrate "their" Mass in the best possible way to bind themselves down to liturgical assistance at Mass?

It is evident that the ordinary Christian is not bound, as is the priest, to "authentic and official" celebration; for, on one hand, he is not the appointed representative of the Head, on the other, not that of the "Mystical Body." The Church, therefore, does not *force* him to follow the very text of the Liturgy in order to satisfy the precept of hearing Mass on Sundays and holy-days. However, the soul that comprehends what "its" Mass is will not wait on obligation to hear Mass better, but will freely and

gladly adopt the best and most fruitful means of uniting itself to the Holy Sacrifice.

Not so long ago the Christian could have excused himself for neglecting to follow the very text of the Mass by pleading the difficulty of procuring it for himself. In fact, until recently, most of our so-called "liturgical" prayer-books bewildered the faithful by offering all sorts of methods of following Mass that employed words, phrases, and sentences that were far from being even paraphrastic, in relation to the words of the Liturgy! It is easy to understand that the devout attendant at Mass would not feel very much attraction for any phraseology which, however pious it might be, would never put him in harmony with the formularies and gestures used at the altar. Thus a certain distaste for the Liturgy that is not understood has come upon most Christians, who, with few enough exceptions, no longer know how to follow "their" Mass, as they should.

Within the last few decades, however, a laudable attempt to do away with this distaste has been made. Today one can easily put into the hands of all the faithful prayer-books that are really liturgical. Some, very complete, are meant for those members of Christ who go to Mass every day;[1] others, less complete, suffice to assure *liturgical* hearing of the Sunday and holy-day Masses, and some of those of days "of devotion."

The authors of these prayer-books have not been content with merely giving the official texts, but

[1] See Reference List at end of book.

have added, for the guidance of the faithful, clear and precise instructions, what may be called, in other words, "rubrics for the laity." Nevertheless, one need not seek in these prayer-books, even though the aim seems to have been to omit nothing, literal and detailed explanation of the official text. For this, one must have recourse to those more erudite and recondite authors, whose special object has been to explain the Liturgy. One or another of the works of these men should be found side by side with the Missal in possession of every Christian who desires to celebrate "his" Mass worthily. Thus armed, the Christian will hear Mass properly; for, understanding the rites, he will follow them interestedly and, gradually, through them arrive at knowledge and love of the "mysteries of the altar."

The advantages of the "liturgical" method

The faithful who will confine themselves to the liturgical celebration of "their" Mass, will not be slow to discover the precious fruits derived from this method.

1. *The altar will be brought nearer the people.* Until now the priest was a distant sort of personage, somewhat like Moses in conversation with God on the mountain, his words and actions shrouded in mystery. The official celebration of Mass has now no longer any secrets. The faithful soul ventures near the priest to co-operate with him in his every liturgical action. He even *talks* with him: the dialogue at the foot of the altar, the confession of sins, the ex-

change of salutations and responses that takes place at different fixed intervals—all impress the Mass-goer with the fact that he is "co-celebrant" since his voice, through that of the altar-boy, is used in the official ceremony.

The Christian who determines to follow Mass liturgically, quickly realizes the great and important rôle filled by him in the Oblation, for it is revealed to him that not only is he hearing *the* Mass but that he is celebrating "*his*" Mass, through the ministry of the intermediary priest.

2. *Mass-goers become instructed in the mysteries of the Faith.* Designedly has the Church introduced into the Liturgy of the "holy mysteries" readings of the highest interest. The Epistles and Gospels offer pious instruction that is inspired by the Spirit of God Himself, and are framed with Introits, Graduals, Tracts, Offertories, and Communions, drawn from the most beautiful passages of the Scriptures. These chosen bits of our Holy Books present an incomparable richness and inexhaustible variety of thought to the contemplation of the Christian by design of the Church, who, in appropriating them, has made a point of fitting them into her "liturgical year." In fact, during the year, the devout Christian covers the whole field of Christian Doctrine, since he considers, one after another, the mysteries of our holy Faith—the Life of Christ, His Death, His Reign, His teachings, His saving truths. Now gay when the feast is joyful, now sad when the solemnity is grief-recalling, the Liturgy exults and weeps, inspiring in those imbued with it the

feelings that ought, appropriately to each season and period of Christian life, to sway God's true adorers.

The Christian who will agree to follow attentively and devoutly the Liturgy of "his" Mass, will gradually become well instructed, even enlightened. One or another, it is true, may claim that for the most part, the sacred texts are beyond him, that he does not grasp their meaning; but there are writers who have settled this difficulty by adding commentaries, understandable by all, to the daily Epistles and Gospels.[2] Through the use of well-written books the member of Christ, provided he knows how to read with eyes of love, will easily discover the marrow of truth hidden under the texts contained in his daily Missal.

3. *Co-celebrants learn how to pray.* In the majority of the sacred texts drawn from either the Old or the New Testament the Missal offers the Christian the world's most beautiful prayers. The Orations as a whole—collects, "secrets," and post-communions—form the most precious collection of supplications imaginable. These Orations, based on the sublimest of doctrines, are, for the most part, couched in language so beautiful, so harmonious, so precise and, withal, so elegant, that they provoke scholars to astonishment.

Just as all our beliefs are recalled in the "liturgical year," so, therein, are sought all spiritual and temporal favors. As he repeats every morning with the priest the Orations of the day, the Christian will

[2] See Reference List at end of book.

not forget to pray for any of his needs: now he will beg God for faith, hope, charity, all the virtues; now he will ask for health, prosperity, safeguards against danger; again, he will plead for eternal rest for his dead, or seek his own salvation in the joy and glory of Paradise. How sweet it will be for him to pray! To petition for all these gifts, he can use the measured, fervent, humble language of the Church; and, in this daily school of prayer, he can form himself in the very attitude and likeness of the postulant who compels God to consider the "lowliness of His servants"!

4. *Co-celebrants learn to hold themselves in honor as sacrificers and victims.* When, together with the priest, they say the prayers of the Offertory and of the Canon, when they follow attentively the symbolic gestures of the officiant, the faithful are, explicity and positively, acting their rôle as members of the "Mystical Body," co-operators with Christ the Head. With the priest they repeat "*we* offer" . . . "*our* sacrifice," and they make all these clear statements in the *plural*, showing, as we learned from the early pages of this book, that they, that we, that all members of the "Mystical Body" are intimately united to the Head in the act of Sacrifice.

Hence, the Christian begins to know what his rôle is—member of the "Mystical Body," co-worker with the Head, co-offerer with Him, in Him, by Him, of infinite Homage to the Most Holy Trinity. The Mass is for him no longer, as he used to consider it before he learned to unite himself to the Priest and His representative liturgically, the special prerog-

tive of the celebrant alone, but is his very own, "his" Mass. So it is with reason that he celebrates "his" Mass with overflowing heart!

Liturgical attendance at Solemn Mass

If the advantages of liturgical following of Low Masses which the pious Christian hears by himself are so great, what benefits must flow from the Solemn Mass at which Christ's member must openly assume the office of co-celebrant by chanting responses to the priest's petitions and salutations and by singing the sacred formularies with the congregation.[3]

That he may take part in the High Mass the fervent Christian need go to no further trouble than to drift with the Liturgy, that is, in other words, to be an active and productive co-worker in the Oblation it is enough for him if he abandons himself to his eyes and ears, joining in the chant he hears, following the ceremonies he sees.

The Introit with its brief doxology is a thought from Heaven intercepted on its ecstatic ascent toward the Trinity. Then come the "Kyrie's," three to the Father, three to the Word, three to the Holy Ghost; three cries of humble adoration, three of

[3] In Catholic countries, particularly France, Canada, Belgium, South Germany, Austria, and Spain, especially in peasant districts, whole congregations know several Gregorian versions of the Ordinary of the Mass, and, frequently, too, have a knowledge of some of the Propers, especially for the great feasts, such as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and Saint of the district. To hear these entire congregations sing Ordinary and Proper, without help of choristers, is thrilling and inspiring.—TRANSLATOR.

remorseful sorrow, three of eager appeal sent up by the whole assembly of the faithful. Is not this chant, which the Gregorian melodies adapt so wonderfully to its accompanying thoughts, of a nature to inspire in us the feelings which, at the very moment, the priest is expressing as he strikes his breast at the foot of the altar-steps?

Next the celebrant incenses the altar. Let us offer the incense with him, first to the Cross. The incense is a figure of homage to Christ, of our adoration, of our joy at being with Him. We salute our Head and Chief, we embalm Him in perfume! Then with the priest let us incense the altar which, also, is the figure of Christ, the "stone," which is the "head of the corner,"[4] . . . His we are . . . let us bind ourselves more firmly than ever to Him—we, who are His co-celebrant members!

In union with the priest who sings the Orations, we pray to God—and how eloquently!—"through Jesus Christ, Our Lord." In a loud voice the subdeacon reads or sings the Epistle; let us listen eagerly to the teachings it contains, for they are appropriate to the day and will be able guides for us in the way of Christian life. In the Gradual, Tract, and Alleluia, we sing our love, our anguish, our repentance, our joy.

At the Gospel, we stand and listen to the words of Christ, Who is there present, although the official taker of His place is the deacon of the Mass. We are hearing Him as but yesterday the multitudes on the mountain were hearing Him. These are His

[4] Saint Peter i, 2, 7.

very own words, the *same*, those that were heard by those happy people of Palestine who gathered around the Master. Would that we could comprehend that, at this moment, not only are the words of the Gospel being once more announced to us, but also that one of the very scenes in the life of Christ is being reproduced in our presence, in our own parish church!

The officiant intones the "Credo." Blending our voices in that familiar chant, let us begin, in loud, clear tone that shall be resolute yet vibrant with feeling, to confess our faith in God the Father, the Creator, in Jesus Christ the Son, Our Head, in the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, in the Holy Catholic Church, the "Mystical Body" of Christ. The Christian who relishes his "Credo" is already foretasting the joys of Paradise.

How agreeable to the soul are the simple yet magnificent chants of the Solemn Mass! At Low Mass the words run like the tumbling, murmurous waters of a happy brook that catches and reflects the thousand tiny, fugitive rays of the summer sun; but the glorious words and melodies sung at Solemn Mass flow on majestically like the waters of a great stream mirroring in its smooth and mighty waves the sparkling light of the sun and of all the firmament.

At the Offertory, the deacon ascends the altar, there to represent the people; it is *we* who, with him, ascend those steps. He pours the wine into the chalice; through him we are pouring that wine into the chalice. The subdeacon drops a little water into

the cup; that water is we who are "mixing" ourselves in Christ to be offered with Him.

The priest incenses the oblations, the crucifix, the altar—all of which are figures of Christ. As we incense the altar with the priest, we are like men sprinkling their Head with perfume, because they wish to embellish and honor the most beautiful part of themselves. Like Mary Magdalen of old, we pour out upon Christ all that we have of sweetness and perfume. Next, incense is offered the celebrant, the clergy, the congregation; from the Head the perfume descends upon the entire "Mystical Body," thus testifying to the union of the members with their "Adorable Head."

Then the Preface is begun. In grave and solemn tones that underline and accentuate the sense of each word, we hold a sort of dialogue with the priest: "Sursum corda," "Lift up your hearts"—"Habemus ad Dominum," "We have them lifted up unto the Lord"—"Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro," "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God"—"Dignum et justum est," "It is meet and just." Why this conversation between priest and people? Saint Augustine tells us: by means of these responses we manifest outwardly and officially that our hearts are "on high," at the altar, to participate in the consecration that is about to take place. At this solemn moment it is necessary that we be asked once again to express our consent and adherence to the Sacrifice in which we shall be co-operators with the Christ Who is going to immolate Himself!

With what power the Liturgy of the sung Mass

makes us ascend "even to the altar of the Lord"; with what majesty it makes us enter into our rôle of co-celebrants is evident. Therefore, after the Liturgy, in its power and majesty, has swept us through praise and adoration of the Trinity in the triple "Sanctus," we must stop for reflection. Now has come the moment for the firm uniting of our will to that of the celebrant pronouncing the words of Consecration. They are said! At the call of the priest, the "Mystical Body's" mouthpiece, Christ has come! Our Head and Chief is in our midst. Let us fall down and adore Him! May "joy and blessing" be to our Head present on our altar![5] May "all honor, all glory come to the Omnipotent Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, through Him, with Him, in Him!"[6]

Again the priest raises his voice. We answer him with an "Amen" that must be an affirmation of our union with Christ and of our faith. Then the celebrant begins our Head's very prayer: "Our Father, Who art in Heaven." This prayer is now being said once again on our altar by Christ Himself; for, beyond dispute, veiled under the Eucharist, Jesus is wholly and entirely at *His* Mass and is voicing the sublime supplication He Himself composed nearly two thousand years ago. Our response to this prayer is the final plea, "Deliver us from evil," that is, from sin, from the devil, from anything and every-

[5] Hymn "Pange, Lingua," sentiment of last verse "Genitori, genitoque." . . . "Laus et *jubilatio,* Salus, honor, virtus quoque, Sit et *benedictio.*"—TRANSLATOR.

[6] Canon of Mass, paraphrase of formula preceding "Pater Noster"—TRANSLATOR.

thing that can bring upon us our most fearful disaster—separation from the Chief of Mankind, our adored Head. This cry, "Deliver us from evil," is wrung from the heart!

At this moment the Christian who "lives" the Liturgy feels that he is actually joined to Christ. With Him he is sharing the feelings of his heart, the thoughts of his mind. Now he is going to "share with" Him sacramentally, for the moment of participation in the eating of the Victim has arrived. He approaches the holy Table, or, if he remains in his place, because he has received the Body of Christ at an early Mass or, unfortunately, does not feel prepared to receive Communion, he causes Christ to enter his heart spiritually through an act of fervent love and desire.

Now let us sing acts of thanksgiving by means of the anthem called "Communion." These anthems, varying with the day or feast, are always sweet and "graceful," truly expressive of gratitude.

Next we must pray that we may use the benefits received as God would have us use them—this is the object of the *last Orations*. Then, when the priest or deacon sings the "Ite, missa est," "Go, the Mass is finished," we answer joyfully, "Thanks be to God!" Finally, bowing our heads, we receive from the Most Holy Trinity the blessing of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. How can we, co-celebrants with Christ, be other than blessed?

One wonders when he sees that some of the faithful prefer Low Mass to the sung Mass, when he hears Christians coolly asserting "I like Low Masses;

Solemn Masses are endless!" For such poor, unenlightened people, one can only weep! They know nothing of "their" Mass, of their rôle as members of Christ, of the infinite Homage rendered the Most Adorable Trinity by the "Mystical Body" in union with Christ the Head. As yet there has been made no step toward their doctrinal and liturgical education! Let understanding souls not hesitate to spread their light over these Christians who, unhappily, are still in shadow!

Should there be singing of hymns during Mass?

In certain localities, on festive or solemn occasions, it is the custom to sing during Low Mass Latin motets or hymns in the tongue of the country, to "entertain" the congregation or to make the Mass more "agreeable." Sometimes there is a rendering of "artistic music" with choruses, quartettes, trios, duos, and solos, in order to attract a crowd for some special purpose. What can be said of such customs?

In the first place, it is regrettable that the liturgical education of our people is not far enough advanced to cause them always to prefer the Solemn Mass or the "Missa Cantata" to those Masses at which there is likely to be very little opportunity for recollection. However, since many Christians like and frequent the services at which there is the singing of hymns or "artistic music," and since the Church seems tolerant in this regard, we must not be censorious. Besides, it must be admitted that

popular hymns, at least, can sustain the prayer of many a non-liturgical soul that, otherwise, would hardly be able to appeal to God even stammeringly.

Nevertheless, with regard to the use of hymns two reservations must be made:

1. *The hymns must be well chosen.* There are doctrinal hymns, rich in teachings on the Mass, the Real Presence, the Redemption, the Incarnation, whose text is always leading the singers back to the thought contained in the "mysteries" that are being unfolded at the altar. These hymns are the ones congregations should sing. Many of them have been composed by Saints. Those of the Blessed de Montfort have become famous, and it is partly due to them that the peoples of Brittany and la Vendée have retained their remarkably pure and firm faith in the doctrine of the Eucharist.

However, along with these "sung prayers" which do not disturb one in the celebration of Mass there have sprung up "mushroom" compositions, pale, vapid, insipid things that are the fashion today and forgotten tomorrow, having not the least power to inspire the faithful with feelings of union with Christ in His Immolation. Bits of music of this kind, inclined to hamper rather than help one's piety, should never be heard in church.

The consideration of what is helpful to, not hampering of, piety and devotion ought to make us appreciate at their proper worth the "musical concerts" occasionally heard during Mass. These "musicales," sometimes called "liturgical concerts," draw large crowds who are quite generous when the

collection-plate is passed; but does this type of "religious music" foster devout attendance at Mass, does it aid the faithful in their co-operation with Christ in His Sacrifice? Are not many members of the "Mystical Body" who are physically present in the church's nave more interested in the organ than in the altar, more attentive to the singers than to the celebrant? Some of our amateurs in art and music claim that "never do they pray better than when they are rocked on the waves of harmony!" They may be speaking the truth for themselves, but, let us hope, they are members of a tiny minority. Is it not safe to say that most of the faithful have a feeling of regret for having allowed their attention to be distracted even momentarily from Christ's Immolation, and safe to believe that this regret is voiced by those who would condone the abuse of "artistic music" in church with the trite saying "Art is praise of God"?

How far are these Masses accompanied by extra-liturgical and non-liturgical singing from the Mass solemnly sung? The latter alone has the secret of true celebration, for, instead of subordinating piety and devotion to art, it makes music the permanent and humble servant of the Liturgy.

2. *The congregation that sings popular hymns during Mass must know that there are certain times in the Mass when silence is demanded.* If the hymns that are sung during Low Mass are well chosen and liturgical, and furthermore, of a nature to foster prayer and recollection, we must remember, nevertheless, that continuous singing throughout the Mass

is out of the question, for some time must be allotted devout souls for meditation and reflection. There are moments in the Mass when silence is fitting. For example, from the "Preface" to the "Pater Noster," no sound except the server's bell should awaken the echoes. Let nothing interfere with recollection at this moment when Heaven and Earth are one! How shall we accustom the children, furthermore, to adore Christ willingly and fervently, if, at the very time when the priest is leaning over the altar to consecrate, they are all forced to take up a verse or burst into the chorus of some hymn in the vernacular?

Practical explanation of "my" Mass during Mass

That the faithful may have a better understanding of the "mysteries of the altar," it is the custom of the clergy of some lands, on opportune occasions—as, for instance, retreat or mission time—to explain to the congregation the Liturgy of the Sacrifice just as it is being unfolded before the eyes. This practice is especially helpful in the teaching of children who are being prepared for First Holy Communion, the dignity and worth of the Holy Sacrifice.

While the officiant is celebrating, another priest stands in the pulpit or at the altar-railing, tells the people the meaning of the celebrant's words and gestures, and instructs them on the liturgical following of the Mass. Generally an effort is made to have

the congregation join the priest in his prayers, particularly those that are said aloud, for example, the "Confiteor," "Kyrie," "Gloria," "Credo," "Sanctus," "Benedictus," and "Agnus Dei." From time to time the explanation is interrupted by the singing of some appropriate hymn that is a perfect expression of the feelings that should be flooding the hearts of those present at Mass.

There is no difficulty in seeing that the explanation of "their" Mass to those actually present at Mass can be made most profitable. It is an "object-lesson," a concrete demonstration that is accompanied by prayer and example. It has the special advantage of engraving on the hearts and memories of little children being prepared for First Holy Communion the rites of the Holy Sacrifice, together with their meaning. It is probably due to this sort of explanation that some Christian peoples seem never to lose their ardent attachment to "their" Mass and to the priest who celebrates it.

There are many priests who show something akin to genius in their explanation of the Mass. They seem to know how to give their instructions the qualities of clearness, simplicity, piety, moderation, and diversity; they never become extravagant in language, yet are never tiresome. The rapt attention of the little children who, like their elders, come in crowds to these "Masses of Explanation," manifests the extraordinary interest that holds them. It would be a good idea to have some of the best of these "methods" printed and published for the use of all the apostles of the Eucharistic Christ.

When should I celebrate "my" Mass?

Beyond question, I should celebrate "my" Mass on Sundays and holy-days of obligation, the least asked of any Christian. Those who comprehend what "their" Mass is, its value, its place in the world's economy, the profit drawn from it by God and man, should realize that the Church is not demanding much when she commands us to go to Mass, that is, to perform Religion's supreme act, *only one day out of seven,* and should come to the conclusion that, if they wish to "answer love with love," their rule should be to celebrate "their" Mass as often as possible.

What is the meaning of "as often as possible" in regard to the Mass? This—the member of Christ who desires to live up to his office in the "Mystical Body" will understand that, unless the duties of his state in life or reasonable hindrance keep him far from church, his place each morning is near the holy altar.

"Duties of one's state in life" are the care a mother owes her children, the obligation of a laborer to go to work at dawn, necessity of staying with a sick person, and the like.

"Reasonable hindrance" would be fatigue, distance, bad weather, but not laziness, longing to sleep, heedlessness.

Let each of the faithful determine for himself what is permitted him by circumstances and his state in life; one will discover that he can attend Mass only on Sundays and holy-days, another that he may attend every day. Since Divine Providence, and

not man, places circumstances and ordains one's rôle in life, one answers the divine desire by attending Mass in accordance with that degree of frequency granted by God, provided that, in one's reckoning, there is absolute honesty with oneself and that morning absences from church are balanced by sincere regret for having missed Mass even involuntarily.

Thus the mother—always with the proviso that her fervor is equal—whose large family keeps her at home will find no less favor with God than the young woman who, unhampered by duties and obligations, goes to Mass every morning. The latter owes it to God to multiply her acts of homage, to compensate for the absence of the former; this is the occasion for manifestation of that fellowship, that communion of souls that must exist! God will give each of His members his complete share of grace in exchange for the Masses it has been possible for him to celebrate.

Too much insistence cannot be placed on a truth that must not be forgotten—that excusable absence from church on the part of Christ's members who are detained by duties of state in life or prevented by "reasonable hindrance" does not justify their complete *forgetfulness* of "their" Mass. If they would profit in full by Sunday attendance, they must, each day, unite themselves in intention to the Holy Sacrifice and, thereby, "celebrate spiritually." This thought ought to be part of every morning's prayer. It is cause for regret that few prayer-books, regardless of bulk, formulate this thought explicitly. This desire for "their" Mass, explicitly formulated, would associate the members of the "Mystical Body"

formally and voluntarily with their Divine Head in His Oblation, and would make them more direct sharers in the fruits of the Sacrifice.

Devout Christians that are united to Christ yet kept far from church by duty or circumstance should "celebrate spiritually" every morning in union with their parish priest, and, in general, with all priests who are celebrating Masses throughout the world.

Let care be taken that children be taught, from their earliest years, so to unite themselves to Christ in the Holy Sacrifice that there shall be born in them the godliness essential to every true member of Christ —esteem and love of the Holy Mass.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

COMMUNION DURING MASS

Wherein it is to be seen that Communion is so dependent upon the Sacrifice that it cannot be separated from it. . . . that, consequently, Christ's member ought to communicate sacramentally at "his" Mass as often as he can, and, at least, always spiritually.

Communion is dependent on the Sacrifice

Too frequently do Catholics take the point of view that Mass and Communion are two separate entities, two separate realities. As we have already said, the Mass, for many people, is merely a "means of procuring themselves consecrated Hosts." Furthermore, Christians have become so accustomed to dwell upon the "real presence" as a wondrous and appealing source of benefits independently of the Sacrifice that makes the Real Presence possible, that many pious souls have become imbued with a devotion to the Tabernacle that is so strong and ardent as almost to dim that of the Mass.

In Christian piety each mystery should be placed according to the order of its importance. Communion, mystery of Christ's overflowing love, is not only bound to the Sacrifice, but even depends upon

it, derives its existence and worth from it, cannot be separated from it.

What is Communion? It is the reception of one of those Sacraments through which flow into our souls the grace and merits of Calvary, that is, of "our" Mass.

Calvary's Sacrifice gave God Christ's merits. Through His Immolation the Saviour placed high on the "everlasting hills" [1] the bottomless well of atonement and grace. How shall we feeble mortals, living on earth so far from heaven, drink from it? By putting our lips to the channels which come down from this "mountain of the Lord" and bring us the "water, springing up into life everlasting" [2] in such abundance that we can drink to repletion. These channels are the Seven Sacraments. All these seven receive their value from Christ's Sacrifice, without which they would be "empty channels." Their one and only purpose is to communicate to us the grace and pardon of Calvary.

Of these seven Sacraments all closely bound to Golgotha, the Eucharist has, in reference to the Sacrifice of Christ, a dignity beyond compare; for, of them all, it is the one most closely united to the Oblation, since it comes into being in and by the very act of Christ's Immolation. It is impossible to vision Communion, that is, the reception of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, without taking into consideration, at the same time, the sovereign Offering of Christ

[1] Psalm lxxv, 5.
[2] St. John iv, 14.

Himself, in which He transforms the bread into His Body, the wine into His Blood!

The member of Christ cannot, then, separate in his thought and in his love "his" Communion from "his" Mass. For him Communion is above all the most intimate of all participations in the Sacrifice of Christ. The direct and immediate effect of this eating of the Body of Christ is the union of the communicant's soul with the Saviour's, thus allowing a little member of Christ to be closely associated with the Sovereign Priest's acts of homage and adoration and to be flooded with the overwhelming merits of the Cross.

The Liturgy shows the mutual dependence of Communion and Sacrifice

The Church, which never errs in her interpretation of hidden mysteries, reveals to us the tie binding Communion to the Sacrifice.

1. *On one hand, there can be no Eucharistic Presence unless the Sacrifice be celebrated.* It is evident that, to bring the Eucharist into being, the Sacrifice must be renewed. We have no other means of procuring Communion for ourselves. Is this not a sign of Christ's will that His perpetual presence in the Eucharist be as closely united as possible to His immolation in the Mass?

For this reason the sacred Liturgy definitely binds the Real Presence and Communion to the celebration of Mass, reminding us that the response to the invi-

tation "Take ye and eat" is "each time done in commemoration of Christ's Passion."

2. *On the other hand, there can be no complete Sacrifice of the Mass without Communion.* Christ has made it impossible that He become the food of His members without the renewal of the Sacrifice, but it is not His will that the Sacrifice be completed without His becoming our nourishment. The priest who celebrates Mass is *obliged* to communicate, otherwise the Mass is not complete; the Christian who is satisfying the Sunday precept must not leave the church until he shall have witnessed the priest's Communion—otherwise he has missed "his" Mass!

Why this ecclesiastical regulation? That the priest, since he is the *official* representative at the altar, of Christ first, then of the people, may point out by some external and public action the union that exists, in the offering of the infinite Sacrifice, between Christ and His members, between the members and their Head. This official and *visible* act of union of the members with the Head is the eating of the Divine Victim by the officiant. It would be a mistaken notion to regard the priest's Communion as intended to satisfy merely his personal piety, for that would be losing sight of our part in "our" Mass. The priest communicates *in our name*, just as a little while ago he consecrated *in our name*. He is at the altar throughout the whole Oblation as our delegate, our proxy. Primarily, his every gesture is of interest to the community at large; by design only secondarily do his actions at the altar affect his personal fervor. *His* Communion takes for granted

that, through the accord of our wills with his, we, also, have united ourselves officially and externally to the Body and Blood of Christ—this is the signification of our obligatory presence at Communion, this the reason why our attitude at this solemn moment must be one of recollection and adoration.

We ought to communicate sacramentally every time we celebrate "our" Mass

The foregoing considerations lead to a logical conclusion: the members of the "Mystical Body" present at Mass ought not to make it the concern of only the priest to unite them to the Head by the eating of the holy Victim, but, since He has "commanded" them to "eat of His Body," they, themselves, should hasten to do so immediately after the celebrant has communicated.

The faithful must leave to the officiant, made priest of the Church for this very purpose, the duty of *consecrating*. Laymen, although sharing in Christ's Priesthood through "baptismal ingraftment," have, nevertheless, neither power nor authority to change into the Body of the Sovereign Priest the host He is holding in His hands, or to transubstantiate the wine in the chalice. Only the minister officially consecrated for this function can bring it about. Therefore, when the priest bends forward over the altar to pronounce the all-powerful words of consecration, the only part the faithful can play in the Oblation of the Divine Victim to God is that of "co-operation of wills."

However, the layman's rôle in Communion is altogether different, for now, in the same respect as the priest, he *can act for himself;* he can perform an external, official, visible act of adherence and adhesion to Christ by walking to the altar in order to share in the Victim, Who—O happy thought!—is Christ, Himself, Body, Blood, Soul, Divinity, just as alive and just as complete as the priest found Him in his own Communion. What reason, then, can prevent members of Christ from being disposed to communicate when they come to church and have the opportunity of hearing Mass?

By remaining in their pews, as so many of the faithful persist in doing, they are practically turning a deaf ear, to their own detriment, to Christ's repeated and insistent appeals: "I will give you my flesh to eat, my blood to drink . . . He who does not eat of my flesh, shall not have life eternal."[3] "Take ye and eat," "Drink ye all of this."[4] Perhaps in His whole mortal life Christ never gave more urgent counsel than that on the eating of His Body; even then He was entreating His future members to join themselves in as close a union as possible to the Sacrificial Act that He was going to renew every day upon our altars.

Every member of Christ who understands "his" Mass and wishes to be united to Christ in it as perfectly and as completely as possible, ought to dispose his soul to communicate every time he offers Mass with the priest. The Christian present at the altar

[3] Paraphrased from St. John vi, 44-54.—Translator.
[4] St. Matthew xxvi, 26, 27.

will be, then, in the strictest sense, "co-celebrant" and "co-oblate" only if he participates in "his" Mass in the full measure permitted him by Christ, or rather, in the measure in which Christ shall *invite* to participate, for in only this case shall he have drawn from "his" Mass all that profit which can mean so much for God's glorification, his own personal gain, and the relief of the souls in Purgatory.

Besides, is not this "disposing of" the soul to eat the flesh of the Immolated Victim an indispensable condition not only for Communion, but also, and above all, for efficient co-operation in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice? Of what value would be the homage of a Christian who would be unworthy to receive Christ shortly with the priest? The following can safely be expressed as a truism: "Only that Christian is truly united to Christ in the Mass who is worthy and disposed to receive Communion." The member whose sins and habits alienate him from the Holy Table is a "dead member." Let this "dead member" be quick to revive, by sacramental confession, the "ingraftment" binding him to His Head, that he may regain the power of celebrating with Him! Henceforth, when he shall have returned to take part in the Sacrifice, let nothing prevent him from clearing the road leading from his pew to the altar!

Why, in our time, have men seemed to forget the intimate relationship between Mass and Communion? How many good Catholics come to Mass not only without a thought of receiving Communion but even without asking themselves if they are fit to receive! How far indeed have we, in our customs, departed

from the spirit that animated the Christians of the primitive Church! In those days of deep faith, the whole congregation would approach the Holy Table; even the just-baptized little children received the Eucharist! Saint Justin writes, "The ministers, whom we call deacons, distribute to all those present the consecrated bread, wine, and water, and these carry them home to the absent." [5] Prisoners, martyrs, and the sick were not forgotten. Thus, the Christian Church, that is, the "Mystical Body" whole and entire, deliberately used to offer and to be offered with its Head, deliberately used to testify, by its eagerness to consume the Victim of the Sacrifice, to the ardor and devotion with which it united itself to Him in His Immolation.

We should communicate at least spiritually every time we celebrate "our" Mass

However, those blessed days are no more, and, until a better understanding of doctrine will have permeated the mass of the faithful, we shall continue to see many of Christ's members, even those who, because of the purity of their conscience, would be worthy to approach the altar, remaining fixed in their places at Communion-time.

The faithful must remember that, while they are waiting to be "disposed," or, if they are already "disposed," while they are waiting to make up their minds to eat of the sacred Flesh, their abstaining

[5] *Apol.* Ch. LXV.

from sacramental Communion does not dispense them from all co-operation in the priest's Communion.

Just as at the Elevation the co-celebrants had to consecrate in spirit the bread and wine, and, united in will to the officiant, to present the infinite Victim to God with the officiant and all the other members of the "Mystical Body," so at Communion-time Christ's members must commune with Christ in some way. Without this union in the eating of the Victim "their" Mass would be unfinished and incomplete. Through this union in the eating of the Victim their participation with Christ in His Sacrifice can be considered a true celebration.

This union at Communion is effected by the Christian at the moment he formulates his general intention of uniting himself to the Mass in all its parts. By that very formulation of intention he joins himself to the priest communicating, to the priest consecrating, and to the priest offering! At least the implicit intention of uniting himself to Christ in Communion is the *minimum* required by the Head of those of His co-celebrants who at "their" Mass do not receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The many Christians who go to Mass on Sunday but seldom have the intention of eating the "bread from heaven" must not be allowed to forget that, unless they shall unite themselves in some way to the priest in his official Communion, they will not have satisfied the requirements for celebration of the divine Sacrifice. Therefore, he that rushes out of church before the celebrant consumes the Sacred Species is not obeying the Sunday precept, and he

that refuses to unite himself by at least some general pious intention to Christ and the celebrant in all their Eucharistic functions, one of the principal of which is Communion, does not hear Mass.

However, the faithful should not be content with this "sufficing little," but should school themselves in surpassing by far the minimum requirement for spiritual Communion by the explicit formulation of voluntary and definite acts of desire of sacramental reception of the Body of Christ. This will be a means for them to make up, as far as possible, for their failure to eat the Sacred Flesh sacramentally.

Since, we must admit, in very many cases, even the best-intentioned of the faithful cannot, sacramentally, approach the Holy Table at each Mass they celebrate with Christ, His members must make it a point to perfect themselves in this exercise of spiritual Communion. For example, must not the pious Christian, who, after he has gone to an early Sunday Mass at which he has communicated, returns to the parochial Mass with the intention of uniting himself to Christ and the celebrant in the solemn celebration, be content with spiritual Communion at this later Mass? Likewise those zealous Christians who, as frequently as they can, assist at two or three Masses a day at only one of which they can communicate, must, if they would share fully in the successive Oblations, communicate spiritually at each of them. How many of the sick, how many of those who live far from any church, how many mothers of families, who find it physically impossible to approach the Holy Table every Sunday, have in spiritual Com-

munion the chance to assure their full participation in the Sacrifice without receiving sacramentally! It is evident that to all these is assured their co-operation in Calvary's Oblation renewed on our altars by voluntary and fervent union with the official Communion of the priest.

Let Christ's members be, then, solicitous about their spiritual Communion, not resting content to make it by means of a rather vague general intention of "going to Mass," but preparing with care and fervor to make a true celebration of "their" Mass through the expression of their sentiments of adherence and adhesion to the Divine Flesh and Blood.

Still, whatever be the perfection of their spiritual Communion, the faithful must understand that it cannot approach in real worth for their souls the official and external sacramental union, the source of wondrous interior effects, that should take place at "their" Mass. Therefore, whenever no insurmountable obstacle prevents, let them eat, in company with the priest who represents them at the altar, the living Flesh of the Son of God.

Should I communicate outside "my" Mass?

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is so closely connected with the Divine Sacrifice that one wonders if the Christian is not showing a lack of doctrinal and liturgical knowledge and sense when he goes to Communion outside "his" Mass. This is a wise principle to follow: "A Christian, without sufficient reason, should never physically separate 'his' Com-

munion from 'his' Mass. If he is forced to communicate outside 'his' Mass, he should never spiritually separate one from the other.' "

1. *A Christian, without sufficient reason, should never physically separate "his" Communion from "his" Mass.* The truth of this statement is evident from everything said in this volume. Communion is an essential part of the celebration of "our" Mass. "Communion is not, above all, a more or less affectionate heart-to-heart talk with Our Lord . . . it is only the most excellent means of taking part in the Sacrifice."[6] Why seek, then, without good reason, to separate what Christ has so intimately joined together?

Thus, the attitude of some of the faithful who hasten to Communion *before* Mass although they intend to stay until the Mass is finished, and of those who allow the priest to complete the celebration and then present themselves at the Communion-rail, after the prayers at the foot of the altar have been said, is incomprehensible. The fact is that these capricious irregularities are not at all infrequent. The excuses given in defence of such procedure are seldom valid; some claim that they pray better during Mass when they make of it an act of thanksgiving, others that they follow "their" Mass better when they are not "distracted" in the middle of it by going to Communion! Words, words, words, that demonstrate only profound ignorance of the doctrine of the Sacrifice and of the sense of the liturgical pray-

[6] Dom I. Ryelandt, Abbaye de Maredsous, *"Pour mieux communier. La Communion unie à la Messe."*

ers that reveal to us our co-operation with our adored Head, Jesus Christ.

Let every Christian make a firm resolution to communicate, unless prevented for serious reason, with the officiating priest at the moment set by the sacred Liturgy.

2. *For a serious reason a member of Christ may physically separate "his" Communion from "his" Mass.* There are many cases, either of general order or of private interest, that may compel the fervent Catholic to separate "his" Communion from "his" Mass physically. For instance, in order not to prolong inordinately the Sunday service the clergy often decide to give Communion only once, at the end of Mass; or, again, the Mass one is attending may be said at an altar where the Blessed Sacrament is not reserved. Sometimes the communicant is pressed for time, and must leave the church before the Mass is finished. Oftentimes, out-of-town people or those who live far from any church ask to receive Communion an hour or so before the Solemn Mass to avoid the fatigue of a long fast; while others, who had no time to confess before an early Mass, will communicate after the priest shall have come back to the confessional to absolve them. Then, too, the bed-ridden and the sick who cannot leave home, cannot communicate at Mass.

The Church has such good understanding of all these cases that she has instituted a rite with special prayers for the administration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist outside Mass. She never refuses, although the hour may be long past that of the cele-

bration of the Holy Sacrifice, to distribute the Sacred Flesh of the Saviour to the sick or, perchance, to the eager and courageous souls who may have remained fasting until noon to gratify their supernatural hunger.

Although the Church, our good and tender mother, has made it so easy for her children to receive the Eucharist, nevertheless, she has affirmed so frequently and so insistently the union of Communion with the Sacrifice that one who would separate physically the one from the other, without sufficient reason, would be paying little attention to her desires. Let the faithful remember, then, that permission to communicate outside Mass is a concession, not an inducement or invitation. Let them use this privilege only when they cannot act otherwise.

3. *The Christian who receives Communion outside Mass should never separate the two spiritually.* However, the member of Christ who, for good and sufficient reasons, makes use of the Church's generous concession and communicates outside Mass, must hold himself in the spirit of Our Lord. Christ has closely connected Holy Communion and His Real Presence with the Oblation of the Holy Sacrifice; the member must not run counter to the spirit of the Head by separating them! Therefore, even when he communicates outside Mass the devout Christian will unite himself interiorly, heart and soul, to Christ offering Himself on the altar and presenting His Father infinite Homage. He will tell himself, furthermore, that every good coming to him from his eating of the Sacred Flesh is produced within him solely by the

Sacrifice of the Cross renewed in the Mass, whose merits are flowing into his soul through the precious channel of the Blessed Sacrament.

Thoughts such as these, based on true knowledge of the Eucharistic Oblation's meaning, will have a twofold influence in the communicant's soul: for, first, they will increase, in his eyes, the Majesty of the Blessed Sacrament Itself; and, secondly, they will, unfailingly and unfalteringly, draw him to the Sacrifice of the Altar.

In fact, in the eyes of the devout Catholic, the divine Sacrament will assume proportions that are beyond the vision of ordinary piety—this Christ Who comes to him is his Head, Whose member he is, in Whose Immolation he participates as sacrificer and victim, with Whom he offers the Most High infinite Homage! This "Adorable Head," holder of the high office of Praiser of the Most Holy Trinity, deigns, that He may show him by what degree of intimacy He is bound to him, to enter into bodily union with His little member! What vistas charm the eyes of the devout who know how to climb these heights!

Once these truths are fully understood by the member of Christ, it becomes nothing short of painful to him to separate Communion from the Sacrifice. To communicate outside Mass seems to him a lessening of his spiritual fruit. There is no longer any need to invite him to choose the moment set by the Liturgy for approach to the Holy Table for Communion, for he, himself, now knows that the Mass is Communion's logical setting. Henceforth he is a fervent "com-

plete" co-celebrant, for he always extends his co-operation with Christ in His Immolation to the liturgical "co-consuming" of the Sovereign Victim.

Liturgical thanksgiving

Communion is first an "official" and liturgical act of completion of the Sacrifice, and, secondarily, the satisfying of the individual's personal love for God; therefore, the thanksgiving following Communion should have the same characteristics. First and before all, it should express the *Church's official words of thanks* proclaiming its gratitude to Christ; then, when this public act of homage is finished, the thanksgiving can become the personal heart-to-heart talk of the member with Christ his Head—a colloquy that can be long and delightfully intimate.

Official thanksgiving is that part of the Mass between Communion and the priest's final prayers at the foot of the altar. It comprises the always charming and poetic anthem called the "Communion" and the Orations termed "Postcommunions." Then it continues through the "Ite, missa est," which we must answer with a heartfelt "Deo gratias," to the blessing, when the priest calls Father, Son, and Holy Ghost down upon us, and finishes with the "last Gospel"—usually the sublime first words of the Gospel of Saint John, that dear Evangelist who makes us see, as with the bold and all-embracing eye of the eagle, in all his writings, particularly in the words of this "last Gospel," all the mysteries of Christ renewed in "our" Mass.

In choosing these prayers to compose the public and official act of thanksgiving which she sets for the priest, the Church indicates that she regards this as the best way in which to thank Christ and the Most Blessed Trinity for the infinite gift just granted us. Why, then, do so many of the faithful who, thus far, have followed the Liturgy of "their" Mass so scrupulously, abandon it the moment they have received Communion? The very liturgical text that seemed such a correct guide to them during their celebration of the Sacrifice is thrust aside the instant Christ enters their hearts! The priest, whose very office makes him the Christian's model, does not sink his head in his hands and hide in some dark corner of the sanctuary; on the contrary, he lifts his head and sings! Why should we not act likewise? On our return to our place after Communion, let us pray with Christ as He would have us pray. Let us, indeed, use the rather long time it may take to distribute Communion to the people for pious, devout, delightful, heart-to-heart conversation with Our Lord; but, the moment the Liturgy takes up again, let us return to the celebration which, just as we commenced it, we must finish with the officiating priest and the entire Church.

Great benefits come upon Christ's member from this course of action. He will be taking active part in the last prayers and sharing in the last graces of "his" Mass. He will be finding in the formularies pronounced by the priest thoughts and aspirations to nourish his grateful piety. His petitions will be heard. He will receive, from the same priestly hand

that just now gave him Communion, the all-potent blessing of the Most Holy Trinity. Finally, he will soar toward heaven's fathomless heights with Saint John. In this *real* thanksgiving, the devout communicant avoids the repetitions, distractions, insipidity, and listlessness that inevitably accompany the "personal thanksgiving" that is always the endless, uninspired, and uninspiring mental revolving of the same ideas.

After the official thanksgiving is over and the priest has returned to the sacristy, the pious member of Christ will continue to express his gratitude to Christ in a *personal act of thanksgiving.* In this personal act, which he may make as lengthy as he pleases, the individual may surrender himself to all the outpourings of his heart. The more his thought shall have been nourished with solid piety through the aid of the Liturgy, the greater shall be his gain from this private and personal thanksgiving.

Communion, "our" Resurrection

The close union of the Saviour's sacred Flesh with ours in Holy Communion has a specific effect promised by Christ Himself when He said, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood . . . I will raise him up in the last day." [7]

We know that, since we are "ingrafted" on Christ, we, His members, share the lot and destiny of our Head. His life, flowing down from Him into us, is ours, His prerogatives are ours, His Resurrection,

[7] John vi, 44, 54.

Ascension, Reign are "*ours.*" Now, Christ's Resurrection was *of His flesh;* so shall ours be. Our body must, then, arise to put on the glory of Christ's Body. Yet, when we His members shall go to rejoin our Head in heaven, we shall meet Him there without our bodies. Our happy and glorious life shall begin while we are still bereft of our mortal flesh. This state of affairs could not be everlasting, because Christ, by making us His members, associates not only our soul to His sacred Soul, but also our body to His divine Flesh. He gives us a pledge and sign of this union of our flesh with the glory of His, in sacramental Communion. The joining of Christ's Body to ours in the Sacramental Species is the external, official, and certain proof that our body, like our soul, participates in Jesus Christ, the Head. Therefore the Saviour must revive our body, return it to us, and present to God a "Mystical Body" made up of members composed exactly like the divine Head and Chief, of *body* and soul. Such is the meaning of "He that eateth my flesh, I will raise him up in the last day."

Why is it that communicants do not give more thought to this wondrous favor? My flesh has been consecrated to immortality by the very fact that it has touched Christ's! What glory, what joy is there in the thought!

What shall we say of the resurrection of those who have never communicated? Those who meet death without ever having received Communion will have missed eating the Body of Christ either because they scorned It or were unable to receive It. The

first shall be damned, and their flesh shall serve them only for suffering. Better had they never awakened from the tomb!

Those who shall have been unable to communicate, through no fault of theirs, must either have known nothing of Communion or have died too young to receive it. These shall share in Christ's Resurrection, for their state of union with Christ as members "ingrafted" on Him carries with it the right to corporal and sacramental Communion. Even though they shall never have been able to exercise this right, theirs it remains, and for them it gains the favors whose source it is. Thus, through this our right as Christians to eat of the divine Flesh, and to touch the Body of Christ with our body, this body of ours is *signed* with the sign of life; it shall arise glorious!

Better than ever, now, do we understand how Christ is *ours* in all that He is. All His privileges are ours, and we may even say that His flesh is ours, since our mortal flesh, sanctified by its contact with that of Christ, carries within it the right to participation in all the glories that shall be the portion in Heaven of the wondrous Head and Chief of the Arisen.

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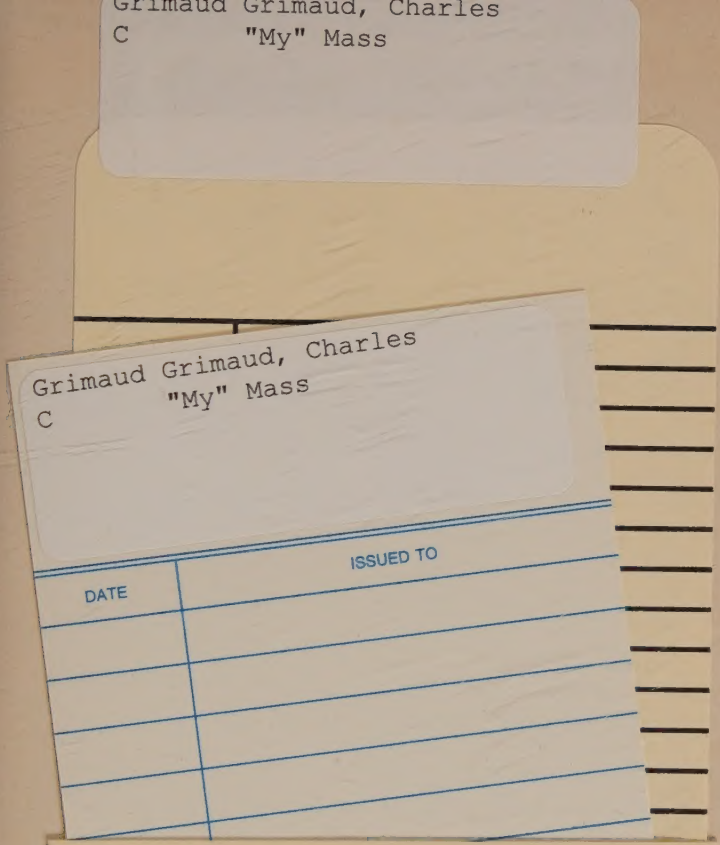

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